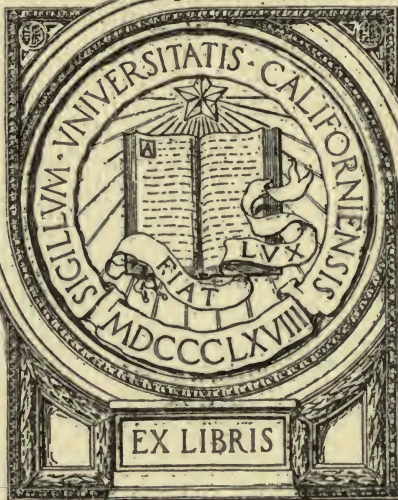


A MISSION TO HELL



EDWARD EELLS

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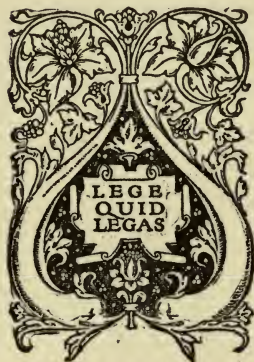


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A MISSION TO HELL

BY
EDWARD EELLS

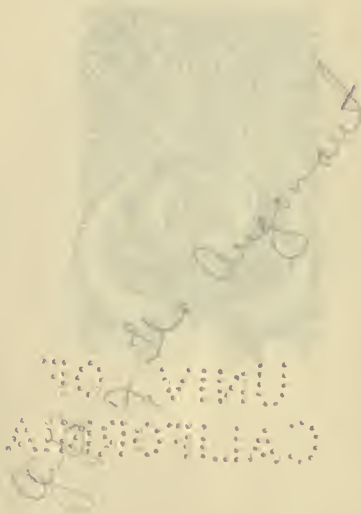
AUTHOR OF
"CHRISTLIKE CHRISTIANITY"



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204
“Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last — far off — at last to all,
And every winter change to spring.”
— *Tennyson*.



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SORROW IN HEAVEN

A MISSION TO HELL

CHAPTER I

I often wondered, back in the earthly life, if we might not, at times, be permitted the experience of a kind of glorified sorrow as a part of the life of heaven. Of course I know now. The whole problem, as it looked then, came back vividly to mind when I met the singer, Strong, in heaven. It was passing the middle of the Twenty-first century, as time is counted on earth. I became conscious of the neighborhood of a sunny, expansive smile, and a strain of tender longing came over my soul fitting the words, "Oh, tell my darling mother, I'll be there."

"Surely this must be Strong," I thought.

"Hello, Sweetheart!" came the prompt response, and we were soul to soul in happy recognition, thinking over together old evangelistic days.

"Do you recall a conversation we had about heaven," I asked him, "about half-past nine o'clock on the morning of the eighteenth of November, 1905, down in Tipton, New Jersey, you and I and Doctor Goodwin from Nineveh, and Brother Weems, my Methodist colleague, just before we prayed for success in our meetings that day?"

"Sure! You said heaven wouldn't be like

Christ without sorrow, and Weems asked you what you would do with Revelation 21.4, 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain;' and then Goodwin came to your help with some Greek, which wasn't fair on us two others then, but I think I'd be ready for him now."

"He said, did he not, that while, no doubt there would be no *πένθος*, lamentation, in heaven, there might be quiet *λύπη*, sorrow, which Paul says may be godly, and may have hope, and which Jesus often felt, and once so deeply that He was near to dying of it in the Garden, before He came to Calvary."

"But that was in His estate of humiliation," Brother Strong objected even now, falling back upon his early teaching, "and it was a part of His finished vicarious sacrifice and suffering for sin."

"And yet He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," I ventured to insist. "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Has He not shown you His heart which through all the ages has been aching over sinful and sad ones, lost in many a world?"

"I was just remembering how it struck me that morning," my friend explained. "Weems and I thought that was about the wildest notion — sorrow in heaven — that you had gotten off to date. I partly recall something that was said about how

our souls would not be narrower in heaven, but broader; and about how we wouldn't feel less regret for all the harm we might have done, but more regret. I thought we wouldn't know or bother about what might be going on on earth or in hell, so as to feel sorry about it all; but Doctor Goodwin rather thought we would still be most deeply interested along that line. You felt sure your father and mother, along with the cloud of other witnesses, were still noticing things that were happening to you on earth, and you thought perhaps they were even more concerned about your brother Harry in hell, if he really had gone there; only you couldn't help hoping he might have died in penitence and faith undeclared at last. I said I was afraid you were getting morbid; and then you wanted to know what I really felt when I sang the chorus of 'Mother's Prayer.' "

At this point my companion sang in soul melody, as not even every redeemed spirit can sing —

"Whene'er I think of her so dear,
I feel her angel spirit near;
A voice comes floating on the air,
Reminding me of Mother's prayer."

"Prester," he confessed, "I used to have people crying when I sang that; and it was only a tender fancy to me. But mother tells me she has been right by me often in crowded meetings when I was singing it, while the air was thick with mother spirits bending over sons and daughters

there. It was the reality that made them weep."

I hardly think I ever knew my friend, Strong, to admit being convinced in a contention, back on earth. I was often conscious that he looked upon me with compassion, as a theorist. Constitutionally somewhat of the sturdy breed of the great American Philistine, such truly wonderful power of sensibility as he showed in singing the gospel seemed almost a pure work of grace. Perceiving that two mortal life-times in Paradise had helped him somewhat, I ventured now to ask if he still thought heaven could be heaven without the softening influence of pity, as one example. "Sweet-heart," he replied, "I am more of a puzzle to myself up here than ever I was in the States. I begin to find out that joy and sorrow are not two opposite things; but two sides of what is often the same thing. I used to look forward to heaven as, in boyhood, I looked forward to a trip to the city. I was going to stride up the golden streets and get whatever I wanted, see all the sights and do just as I pleased. I thought I would get a rest from bothering with so many people. Bless you! I never knew what it was to be really busy till I got here. Travel? Why, I have to whisk around from world to world. Sing? I'm at it all the time. I pray with people as I never prayed on earth. You know I used to tell you how I could just see what people were thinking here and there among my audiences; but we never thought what it would be up here;

to be in the conscious interchange of several thousand spirits at once, and recognize each one, and love each one, and try to help each one in some way; and give, and give, and give, getting only by giving. Sometimes on earth, on the closing night of a great series of meetings, the whole audience would swoop down upon us, and shake hands till my arm ached. But here we touch each other like a school of herring, and every touch is a distinct and different thrill. I used to think our good easy time up here might be diversified by welcoming a friend now and then at the pearly gate; but really that isn't the millionth part of it. Heaven is no mere picnic on a river bank. Heaven is the strenuous life. Heaven is the power station of immensity. Heaven is the world-bureau. Heaven is the eternal market day. Heaven is the cosmic exchange. Heaven is the crowning convention. Heaven is the university of the universe."

"And you know you wouldn't take the same interest, if it were different."

"Well, I guess not! Why, I used to look forward to heaven as the rest which follows perfect accomplishment. The capstone of the whole thing would be put on, the scaffold cleared away, and nothing left but congratulations to all eternity. I used to sympathize sometimes with the hard-worked woman who left the epitaph to be put on her tombstone, 'I'm going to do nothing forever and ever.' But that was just physical.

Heaven is the rest remaining; but it is like the rest of getting well started — when you've got your horses groomed and hitched up and all the morning chores attended to, and you've got everything snug in the wagon and off you go, reins in hand, with a sharp eye on the road; or when it's a house you are building and you've got your plans and specifications all worked out, the foundation laid, every stick of the frame cut — and up she goes! Heaven is rest from worry. You don't get tired; because there is just friction enough to make things go. Why heaven is all 'go.' I used to think I could go slow in eternity; because there would be plenty of time for everything. Now I find there is just enough time and none to spare, if you're going to keep up."

"So we each find what we need most," I answered. "When I first came upon my dear old Professor Noah K. in heaven, he was in the center of a stillness which seemed to take in the universe. There he remained with great, unblinking vision sweeping over the infinite sea of thought. 'Pres-ter,' he said, 'I really never found time to think at the University. I used to catch half an idea now and then, along after midnight when the others were quiet in sleep. But God and I are thinking, thinking, thinking now!'"

"And I can just as truly say," Brother Strong rejoined, "that God and I are hustling now. That is what makes the whirl restful and satisfying. When we awake here in heaven we are

satisfied with His likeness. We are struck on our job; because our Master works with us. We look into His face, and see what to do next. It was the first part of a revival that used to tire a fellow. When the people were critical and suspicious and offish, and they wouldn't sing and wouldn't respond to anything. But when we began to feel God working with us away down in their hearts, so quietly, and the atmosphere of the meetings began to get tense with surpressed earnestness, and you could hear the congregation remember to breathe at the close of solo or sermon; when the fire came down, and men that had been hard were kneeling and weeping for sin; there was nothing to tire a man in the work. I just felt that I could sing all night. It wasn't me singing, it was the Holy Spirit, and angels were in the choir. Heaven is like that, only more so."

"Wouldn't you like to go back to earth and do more of it?" I asked him.

"Why, I do hover round a good deal," he replied. "Heaven is splendid, but for the supreme thrill; there's nothing quite up to the touch of baby souls just new born in conversion. There's nothing beats a revival after all, and we do like to go and help."

"But wouldn't you like to do evangelistic work again on your own initiative," I asked, "as you did in the old mundane sphere?"

"Why, yes," he acknowledged, "I can't say

I wouldn't. But I take it out in knowing about the revivals going on upon a number of planets at once, and in putting a little more soul-melody into each."

"Does this entirely satisfy you?" I persisted.

"Why, what are you coming at?" he inquired in almost the old-time tone of bottomless suspicion with which he was sometimes wont to turn upon me.

"I hardly know whether to tell you or not," I replied. "You used to see little that was reasonable in my dreams. But I have to confess a wistfulness that leaves even heaven incomplete. You are, no doubt, perfectly happy; because in all your Christian life on earth you were doing, I believe, all you honestly saw to do, or thought you could do to win others to heaven. But I look back and see so many whom I might have influenced more decidedly to seek salvation, and I was often timid and hesitating about it; so they are lost. Could you ever forget if you had tried to save a drowning man, and had thrown a rope almost within his reach, seen him half clutch at it, and yet go down? I understand some things that were in men's minds now, and many a forgotten conversation comes back to me interlined with the unconfessed thought of the other man. I spoke to my brother once just as we were coming through a tunnel to the union station in Baltimore, where I had to leave the train. We were on our way each to his home from our moth-

er's funeral. I had tried all the way from Washington to get my poor tongue to speak to him of heaven, while he would talk of nothing but railroads, and of mechanical details and appliances, as was his wont, and when I broke in upon all that at last in sheer desperation, and asked him abruptly if he meant to meet Mother in heaven, he said hastily, 'Now I don't want any of that.' I replied weakly that I didn't wish to frighten him away from religion, but that I longed to see him saved. I never saw him afterwards, and never received a definite reply to what I could find time to write to him on the theme that is worth the while. Now I know something of what he was really thinking all the way along from the Capital before that, and it wasn't really wheels and switches at all, but it was mostly the way Mother's face looked as the setting sun, out at dear old Rock Creek cemetery, sent its rays slanting into her coffin by the grave. All that was needed was an overmastering love in my heart at that time, and he would have shaken his mind loose from mechanical things long enough to have cried to his mother's God for mercy. I have looked for him in vain in heaven. I would like to go and look for him in hell."

My fear was realized. As I breathed this thought into my friend Strong's soul, he began to recede from me. As if from a widening distance came the farewell, "Good-bye, Sweetheart, I'm rushed just now: I'll look you up again."

Then very faintly came the echo of a hymn he used to sing with great effect about the judgment —

“ And oh what weeping and wailing
As the wicked were told of their fate!
They cried to the rocks and the mountains,
And prayed — but their prayer was too
LATE.”

One of the strange things about heaven has been to have the thought suddenly occur of people we have missed meeting at all; one or another, perhaps, even from among the members of some of our pastorates on earth. It would come over us — Jeanie and me — after decades of glory, and one of us would exclaim, “ How strange it is that we haven’t met that Mrs. So-and-so, who sang solos with such heartfelt expression in such a choir? ” Or at another time the other would query, “ Why do you suppose we have never come across Elder This-and-that? He was always so willing to go to Presbytery; it seems strange not to find him here in heaven’s general assembly and church of the First Born.”

These failures on the part of one and another expected-one to appear in heaven often made me wonder at the grace of God in my own salvation. I could see little explanation; except that it must be because my own failings had been so obvious to all, that I had been compelled, in deference to the common opinion, to put all my dependence in

the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and no dependence whatever in my own achievements for God, which were few enough on the most liberal reckoning. As I still recall to mind the faults in me which have called for the forgiveness both of God and of my fellow men, I wonder more and more to find myself here in heaven at all; but I have reflected that if I had not been granted entrance to heaven, I could never have had the wonderful experiences which I am about to narrate. Having thus been admitted to Paradise in the old-fashioned way by virtue alone of the atoning blood of my crucified Savior, I find myself really very much more at home here, and more entirely at my ease than I had expected. If my salvation and the ground of my admittance had been in my own carefully cultivated character, some of the experiences I have gone through would probably have made me tremble lest that character would crumble away. But I am still depending entirely and surely upon Christ, and when everything else has seemed to be rocking to ruin around me, I have found Him able to save even unto the uttermost of heaven or hell. I have been astonished to find how much congenial company of saved sinners there is in heaven, while I have strangely missed some very correct acquaintances I knew on earth. For a long, long time these missing ones were simply not in our universe. "Papa, where is hell anyway?" our middle girl, herself a great-grandmother now, has often asked

me. It seemed so strange, free as we were to search infinity, that we never came upon any trace of hell. I talked this over once with David Livingstone, who is still exploring for missions throughout dark planets, and he said he thought it must be in accordance with heaven's law of nearness, by which the souls who happen to be thinking and feeling alike attract each other, and those we love most we are most with. "Not miles but mind, not leagues but love count in the rapid transit of the spirit world. No matter where our thought carries us," Livingstone said, "hell is still the same distance off from those who love God."

This is why, with all our wondering debates, we cannot have any arguments in heaven. When a real divergence of soul transpires, each finds the other out of connection. This was one occasion of frequent prayer while I was waiting in heaven for my wife; for we did sometimes have arguments on earth. Jeanie is conservative in all her sympathies. She was intensely sensitive to all the narrow opinions of the dear, contracted souls around us, while I can see now that I was simply absent-minded and obtuse to much that seemed all important in their scheme of thought; much as they interested one in their ways, and grateful as I felt for the friendship they gave me. So I used to ask God to make me more like my own dear girl by the time she came on, and she says she breathed a similar daily prayer. Thus we

really grew more together during the fourteen years of our separation than during our wedded life on earth. "It's love that draws the strongest after all!" Jeanie declared in triumph after the first speechless joy of reunion. We felt sorry for some of the ill-assorted couples of our mundane acquaintance who found one another almost strangers in heaven, while other soul-attractions filled each life.

But we came near losing each other once in heaven when we renewed the discussion of the parable of Dives and Lazarus. More than once in the mortal life we had argued over it. Jeanie contended that Lazarus had not been permitted to go to the help of Dives; so I might as well give up, once and for all, my day-dreams about ever being sent on a mission to hell. I asked her to notice that Dives showed only a selfish motive in asking for Lazarus to be sent with the drop of water for his parched tongue. He showed no sign of penitence for his selfish earthly life. Jeanie thought Dives was represented as putting his request in an humble manner, and also that he was showing some unselfish concern for the welfare of his brothers left on earth. I admitted that hell, in the parable, was apparently doing Dives some good, and this beginning of a change in him thrilled me with a hope that he might yet reach a state of mind to which Lazarus might profitably be sent, to tell him how he could find pardon and redemption. Jeanie said if that

could happen, it would prove that the gulf had not really been fixed after all. Then I told her that I did not wish to harbor in mind a single hope or belief which was not well founded upon a reverent and rational interpretation of God's word, our supreme rule of faith and practice, but that I had seen people in this world — housed in the same boarding house, joined as husband and wife — between whom there was a gulf fixed, and neither could get across. Yet the gulf might close together when a heart was changed.

But Jeanie had not such easy confidence in moral transformations. "There are some people so set, nothing can improve them," she would insist. "How could Elder Smiley, for instance, ever possibly get to be man enough really to be converted and reach heaven? The book of Revelation says, 'Without are dogs,' and it mentions a few kinds of people meaner than dogs. What use would there be in having a hell, if very compassionate, tender-hearted people like you, dear Boy, were to be allowed to go there and hobnob with all sorts of scaly characters — like as not the Devil himself — in the hope of bringing some of them to repentance? Didn't Abraham, in the parable, positively say that that sort of thing wasn't allowed?"

"Perhaps Abraham, himself, had no authority to send Lazarus," I would still demur. "The parable plainly forbids us to think that spirits might be allowed to pass between heaven and hell

on a merely humanitarian impulse. And certainly if any unrepentant soul could ever be conceived of as sneaking out of hell, even into heaven's gladdest center, the gulf would be fixed still — all around it. But it may be that the Master of all, who Himself went and preached to certain spirits in prison, when He hastened to descend into Hades, after completing His atonement for sin on Calvary, as if most eager to offer its availing power in hell, where, assuredly, nothing else could avail but that atonement; it may be that the Master, Himself, might in His eternal, changeless love for lost souls permit some who feel the same eagerness, to carry to them the message of salvation in Christ for all, even those in hell, whose hearts might become truly broken and contrite for sin."

"Nathaniel, I am astonished at you," Jeanie would exclaim. "For a Presbyterian to talk in that way! What *will* the Presbytery think of you?"

"The Master knows I am trying to be honest with the Presbytery," I would answer. "There is nothing very definite in the standards of our church in opposition to a belief in future probation, nor is there in the Bible either, as we read it more carefully."

Then Jeanie would fall back upon other parables. "Anyway you know the tares must be separated from the wheat," she would declare triumphantly, "and burned with unquenchable fire.

The sheep must be separated from the goats, and these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

"*Æonian* is the word used. It is the punishment and life of the æons, the ages."

"Is it the same word for both? — both the sheep and the goats?"

"Yes — æonian — which is not the strongest word for duration in the Greek tongue either."

"But it really means eternal and everlasting for the good people in heaven?"

"Assuredly; Satan will never pluck them out of the Savior's hand."

"Then it must mean truly everlasting punishment for the bad people in hell," she would reason triumphantly.

"We might think so in a narrow literal spirit of deduction, if good were not in the nature of things eternal as God is eternal; while it does seem that evil should be, at the very worst, in God's world, temporary, evanescent, ephemeral."

"You're no better than a Universalist!" she exclaimed reproachfully.

"I'd like to think I might get to be almost as good as one or two of them," I replied; "but Universalists as a rule, I believe, do not accept the doctrines of grace — that Christ died for our sins as our substitute, and that we are justified alone by faith in Him, our Savior. This to me, as truly as it was to Luther, is the doctrine of the standing or falling church. It is the only key to

the problem of evil in God's world, and the only hope of better things for lost and ruined sinners here and hereafter."

"And do you think it really is for people in hell?"

"If I could not humbly dare to think so, I would lose my reason contemplating the dreadful-ness of the alternative," would be my answer. "Our tender Jesus tells us the most terrible things about hell and the judgment. But He also gives us incidentally, it seems to me, many assurances upon which we can build a hope for the continued activity of redeeming love in the great hereafter. He never says positively that there is no further probation, but rather suggests pretty plainly that there is a forgiveness, at least for some sins, in the world to come. The great standard parable gives us the condition in which Dives and Lazarus found themselves immediately after death. The simile of the sheep and the goats gives us the separation and doom at the judgment day. There is no hint just here of a possible reprieve in that æonian punishment for those who may grow sorry and truly turn to God. But we can confidently fall back upon the fundamental principles of God's love which cannot change, of His mercy which endureth forever. Our Lord Himself tells us there is lesser and greater condemnation; there are few stripes for some, and many stripes for others. So I cannot think Christ blames me, if I wonder wistfully whether after

preaching His dying love so imperfectly and for such a little while and to so few people on earth, I may be allowed to take the message again to some in hell as He seems to have done, and as these who framed and used the original Apostles' Creed must all have believed He did, or they would not in the creed have put 'hell' so plainly into antithesis with 'heaven.' I would like, if it were God's will, to tell the story of redeeming love to some earnest-minded heathen who has died without ever having known Christ. I would like to tell it to some pious Jew who has died hating the name of Christ, because of the persecutions by Christians. I would like to tell it to some of the poorer people we could never get to attend church, and to some of the poor fellows who died of drink, and to others who have been so prejudiced, they really never have known how to be saved. I think I would like to try the Gospel again on the wickedest man we have known."

"That's Elder Rorer," my wife would interrupt.

"Yes, I'd like to find poor Rorer in hell and say to him, if I might, 'Rorer, God still loves you. It is still true that Jesus died for you.' I'd like to see how he would take it, after learning some of the lessons of perdition."

"He would just try to do you some terrible harm," Jeanie would say with a shudder.

But when we were together again in heaven, there came a time when my precious girl said very

wistfully, "Dear Boy, when I look on your soul, it is all clear to my sight, but one little spot which is so bright that it is dark to me. You are not telling me all you think."

I replied that I hesitated to grieve her with the old subject; which was once only a fancy, but in heaven it had grown to be the very wistfulness of existence.

"You mean you still wish to go on a mission to hell?" she asked me anxiously.

"I ask God to take the wish away, if it is wrong," I answered.

"I wonder why you cannot be perfectly happy," she said, "here in heaven with me and Mother and Father and our glorified baby twins, and all our children and grandchildren and all these millions of lovely people."

It was then that we slipped out of touch for one of those half-hour spaces in heaven. It was mainly my fault, I fear; I should have become by this time more alive to the finer feelings of her sex. I only perceived that she was not interested, and so fell to musing. Just then there came a wave of soft influence through heaven, informing those who cared to know that America had gone Imperialist. It did not occur to me at the moment that politics would appeal to her, and I found myself drawn to a group of some hundred millions who immediately closed in for a talk with Grover Cleveland and Theodore Roosevelt, the men whose strong administrations had so much to

do with turning the current of national life toward this desirable consummation.

There was one occasion during our earthly existence when I had the misfortune actually to forget my wife. We were on our way to a party. I left her standing on a quiet street of Churchville just for a moment, while I stepped across to the house of a neighbor on a corner. They bowed me out by a side door, and I went on down that street to the post-office. There I found a number of friends to be interested in while the mail was being sorted, and getting a letter which required an answer by the morning mail, I went half way home. Then the thought of home's cheery welcome recalled me by association to my own sweet girl left upon the sidewalk. You may be sure I did not find her there, and I had to face a houseful of guests at my friend's party, greatly amused with the story of my young wife's bewilderment when I did not return to her side.

On the occasion of this second mental lapse (which occurred in heaven) we were looking, while Cleveland and Roosevelt talked, down upon the splendid empire of the two American continents over which the new people's king was to reign, so long as his sovereignty should be for the welfare of the nation; and I was drawn to contrast this varied realm of twelve hundred million inhabitants, with the part of God's whole great kingdom known to me as yet. I remembered how, in student days, I had sometimes practiced giving

one comprehensive glance over an extended landscape, then closing my eyes to see how many of its features had been thus photographed upon my memory. So now I thought I would let rays from the whole sphere of cognizance stream into my soul at once; I distinctly noticed the solar system with which I was most familiar, Sirius and his planets bathed in ruby light, certain twin suns of varied colors whose worlds knew no night, only marvelously blended changes of sunrise and sunset, half daylight of crimson, half daylight of blue, mingling into complete double sunlight of purple. I peered into iridescent depths of flaming orbs and whirling nebulae; I caught the glitter from glaciers of dead worlds and searched the gloom of their center-deep volcanic caves. I revelled in the near vision of unspeakable glories along the Milky Way. My soul was filled to overflowing with the grandeur and beauty of God's universe. Some of its infinitely varied forms of physical and spirit life were revealed to my glance; gigantic Martians, Jupiter's fire-dwellers, great æther insects, strangest blendings of soul and body. I caught the reach of the world's fourth dimension, long known to mathematics, inconceivable to sense, stretching out to the infinity of purely spiritual existence. I felt the myriad kiss of heaven's companionship of souls, and heard the sweep of its seventy octave symphony of rapture. My baby spirit, straining to its utmost capacity to take in this tiny

fraction of the infinite reality of things, nestled closer still to God at that moment. "Thou art all, and in all, and yet beyond all," my heart whispered; "but Thou art only the same crucified Jesus, who hast died for me!"

And then the thought came over me with sudden longing, "even hell is a part of Thy being."

"The Lord of all Himself through all diffused,
Sustains and is the life of all that lives."

My heart went out to this great terrible, unknown dependency of God. I knew in that moment that what I felt was just a little bit of Christ's own longing over lost souls. I seemed to be just beginning to live. Eagerly I strained my gaze toward the horizon of the universe. I was ready at once to fly to hell. Faces from the past crowded upon my memory. Several were suicides. Others had died suddenly, unrepentant. Some were honest doubters apparently to the last of their earthly life. I thought of the untold millions whom I had never known, bred in sin, living in darkness, dying in despair — cut off in the rage and terror of battle with curses on their lips — dying in dependence upon human absolution, upon pagan rites. Oh, if I could help save some of them yet! Then God answered my heart more plainly than in all my life of faith and prayer; and I knew that just as soon as I was quite ready for the trust, I would be led out upon its mission. I knew now that the desire to visit

hell on this saving mission was a work of God's Holy Spirit in my heart, that it was in perfect harmony with Christ's eternal longing to save, and that others were being prepared for the same endeavor. It was as though many unseen hands touched mine in comradeship. A new kind of friendship came into my soul's life just then, changing the light of heaven. Here we know whenever people are loving us often without knowing who they are. The first touch of souls who were to be peculiarly united through eternity thrilled through and through me during those moments; and then the thought of the dear old ties came almost like a temptation. Would they be weakened, lessened now? Instantly I came back to the half-hour before and exclaimed to myself, "Why, what have I done with my wife?" Then I felt something pulling. At first it was like a cobweb; then as I yielded to its pull it was like a fine thread, a silken cord, miles and miles of it. Then I realized that she was wishing for me, that her heart was calling me, that, for some reason, she was almost in trouble. And when we found each other, her soul had turned pale. "If you will promise never to do like that again," she said, "I am willing to go with you myself on your wild goose chase to hell."

CHAPTER II

After that the secret was out in the family, and we had some truly tall talks, sitting together in heavenly places. Father said one thing had composed his mind to a certainty that there could be small truth in the "larger hope" of future probation; namely, the inexpediency of preaching it. He quoted the preamble to our Presbyterian Form of Government, Article IV, which declares that "Truth is in order to goodness, and the great touchstone of truth is its tendency to promote holiness." And our Savior's dictum, with regard to men, he thought, would apply equally to doctrines—"By their fruits ye shall know them." Men, at the best, were altogether too prone to postpone their day of repentance; and when we removed from them the fear of death as the fixed and unalterable boundary line of the soul's probation, beyond which there could be no space found for repentance, though we might seek it carefully and with tears; we greatly reduced the probabilities of repentance at any time during the mortal life. "'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily,'" he quoted, "'therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' Accord to fallen human nature even the glimmer of a hope that it may pass out of the earthly existence unreconciled to God, yet meet an opportunity somewhere beyond

in eternity, embracing which it may patch up some sort of tardy compromise and achieve heaven at last; you will then labor all but in vain to secure conversions here. Men will venture upon the risk of losing somewhat of heaven's first joy, trusting that their delay may not prove entirely fatal, but that God will stand in unchanged complaisance ready to forgive them when they are ready to be forgiven. Such a doctrine cannot be true; because it cannot be helpfully preached."

What could I say but that I thought so too? For the people who are putting off repentance in the hope of extended probation, there can be but one scriptural and rational answer. But why give them a false hope that they may wait to repent at any time before they pass the uncertain, accidental boundary line of physical death? Does not this reduce the whole matter of a sinner's relations with his wronged and slighted God to an exciting game of chance, with the fun all on the side of dallying with life's opportunity of reconciliation? Why not say firmly and positively, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts?" Why extend even for a moment the term of probation to a hesitating, scheming, stock-jobbing type of delayed repentance, which aims to drive the sharpest bargain possible with God's indulgence to a soul that would dearly like to sin a while longer, and then be sweetly saved just a little while before

death comes? Is it enough to warn such people of the uncertainty of the mortal life? What warrant have we for giving that kind any hope at all in God's continued mercy? Why not say frankly: "I fear you haven't soul enough to be saved anyway? The appearances are that you are already hopelessly reprobate and incapable of genuine repentance. Not on the prolongation of your uncertain mortal life, but upon this brief present moment hangs the only hope for æons before you. By bare possibility it may not yet be quite too late for your shrivelling soul to cry to God for grace to be ashamed before Him." Why should we, on the authority of a few scattered allusions in God's Word, possibly over-emphasized, become quite positive that physical death, which from a moral point of view is only an accident, must invariably terminate moral probation; while we make little of the altogether scientific and tremendously scriptural fact of soul death in either world as the natural boundary line of a soul's probation? Surely, our religion should be the perfection of common sense.

"Father," I answered, that time in heaven, "I am reminded of two hymns sung occasionally in your meetings during my boyhood, the first of which I could only wonder about, even as a child; while the second has often appealed to me with greater emphasis, perhaps, than the author ever intended.

“While life prolongs its precious light
Mercy is found and peace is given;
But soon, ah! soon, approaching night
Shall blot out every hope of Heaven.”

That was the one I found it hard to believe, and
this was the other:

“There is a time we know not when,
A point we know not where,
That marks the destiny of men
To glory or despair.

“To pass that limit is to die —
To die as if by stealth;
It does not quench the beaming eye
Nor pale the glow of health.”

We have to be careful how we think of people in heaven; for if we become too sympathetic in thought with them at a given moment they are apt to turn up. But we were glad to welcome to our conversation the shy polyglot of Princeton and of heaven, my father's instructor in the forties, Joseph Addison Alexander.

“You were quoting my hymn,” he said. “and naturally I am interested.”

I told him I had often wondered if he had ever thought of that limit of probation, that

“hidden boundary between
God's patience and His wrath.”

as lying, in the experience of some reprobate souls somewhere beyond the uncertain boundary line of the mortal life.

Alexander's answering smile was like the glimpse of some vast landscape through parting clouds from a mountain's top. "Do you know," he acknowledged, "I used often to long for heaven's wider knowledge during earth's brief study hour; but since I came here I hardly feel so sure about a number of things as I felt down in the old dear, dogmatic Princeton. If there are souls somewhere so dead that Christ's mighty word cannot speak them back to life, it would seem almost better if in God's justice and His mercy they could finally and forever cease to be. But even such an end would introduce an element of failure into God's world, which, by His very nature, should culminate in entire success. Who knows how many birth throes of souls becoming alive from the dead out of the womb of hell's anguish may be hidden from our eyes by this mystery of separateness which baffles all our learning?"

I told him how Father had just been laboring to convince me that there could be no work of regeneration in hell, on the simple ground that the effect of preaching such a possibility of future salvation would have led men to postpone repentance." "I have to admit," I said, "that the worst man, perhaps, I ever knew, Rorer by name, claimed to be a believer in a doctrine they called the 'Millennial Dawn,' which included a belief in

the final restoration of all things. I am sure, on the other hand, a great deal of good has been accomplished by the singing of your solemn hymn. And would God have blessed it, if it had not been quite true? ”

“I could only wish that we had sung it oftener,” Father said. “We quoted and cited it often from the pulpit, but our people for some reason seemed to find it hard to sing.”

“In my generation, it was not even quoted often,” I admitted reluctantly. “Reprobation, Hell, the Judgement were not the usual themes of pulpit discourse. ‘Brimstone corners’ were hardly found any more among all our churches. Our preachers did not warn men much to flee from the wrath to come. They only strove to attract. And they confined their preaching largely to matters of this life. Doctor Hitchcock launched us from the Seminary with the advice that it was, perhaps, a weakness in any religion to emphasize eschatology.”

“I wonder what he thinks about that now?” Father suggested, with his own playful, sweetly reasonable smile, only glorified.

“I think now that ‘eschatology’—thought about the last things—is nearly all,” replied the incisive professor, joining us as we might have expected. “If I were on earth again to preach and teach, the burden of the message I would give and commend to others would be Eternity, ETERNITY! The great, unsupplied need of your

generation, Prester Junior, was a credible, preachable eschatology. The minds of your contemporaries had recoiled from the awfulness of an eternal, hopeless state of punishment for nine-tenths of the men and women and children that ever had been born. When you tried to preach it, the words stuck in your throat. The only alternatives of belief to be presented were the probation after death, or salvation by works, by the light of nature, without any true faith in God's mercy secured by Jesus Christ. Joseph Cook claimed that in conscience was the essential Christ. But conscience could not present Christ the Saviour, only Christ the Judge. Before the bar of his own conscience the most unenlightened of men honestly stands condemned. Dante's inscription over the gateway of hell applies to every one: 'Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not!'

The big brained man of Boston himself gave his assent, coming to us in response to our thought of him at that moment. "I practically said the same thing one Monday," he claimed. "I declared in effect that every man, always, everywhere, infallibly knows in every course of action whether he means to do right or means to do wrong. I said a great many things in too much of a hurry during the mortal life; but I still hold that in conscience was the essential Christ; because the condemning conscience drove men to cry to God for mercy, in one groping way or another; and through the merit of the unknown Christ, that

true heart-cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' always sent the petitioner down to his house justified. Always, everywhere, he that calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And it does not matter so much whether he calls God Jehovah, Allah, Vishnu, Great Spirit, or what not, so he calls in honest repentance for God's forgiveness."

"How shall they call upon Him of whom they have not heard?" Alexander quoted. "As a matter of fact, how many heathen have we met in heaven, saved without a knowledge of Christ?"

"Dear Professor," Father said, "I fear you must be still something of a recluse. I have met numbers of pious Jews, who never experienced aught on earth but a grieved spirit of prejudice against the Christ whose professed followers had persecuted them. But they had often prayed after David, 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin?' I have not asked them how they came to know Him, but indeed, they are the ones who seem to love Christ most in heaven."

"I never could quite come in touch with a Jew," Hitchcock admitted. "I could always see snakes in their eyes. But I rather like the Jew of history, and I've found several of them here to tell me about mediæval events that once puzzled me. We were so much occupied over the secret springs in the bed of the current of history that I never thought to ask them how they came here."

"There are a great many more people in

heaven than we have yet met," Cook declared. "I had the pleasure, not long ago, of a talk with Plato, Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, and Seneca. I was wondering about them and longing to know them, when they all came at once. Let us wish for them awhile, in hopes they may not be otherwise engaged."

Surely enough, presently they were with us, and also Mozoomdar, one of Joseph's old-time Hindoo cronies. Our spokesman addressed the Father of Philosophy first. "Tell us, Socrates," he said, "when, before drinking the hemlock, you ordered a cock sacrificed to Æsculapius, did you entertain any idea of a sin atonement; did you think of yourself as needing God's mercy?"

Socrates responded hesitatingly, "I hardly know what moved me at that moment. I know now that I was all my life groping after Christ, the living Logos, the Idea, the expression of God. But I found that I had to find Christ himself, before I found heaven."

"So it was with me," exclaimed Aurelius. "Immediately after death I saw a great light, and heard His voice, saying to me as to Saul of Tarsus, 'I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.' I came into heaven as a chief of sinners infinitely forgiven only through the merits of the Crucified One, whom I had persecuted ignorantly through unbelief."

Mozoomdar had a similar experience to relate. "The terrible fact about our Hindooism, no mat-

ter how much clarified," he admitted, "was its denial of God's unity in love. The vast number of us died unreconciled to the true God, when all we needed was the gospel to help us know Him. The awful crime of prosperous, well-informed Christian people, on account of which untold millions of my race are wandering in hell's outer darkness still, was the withholding of the gospel. We got a wrong start in childhood on earth, and many of us are going wrong still. I know; because I have seen."

We listened with intense interest to these testimonies of men who had been seekers after God all their mortal lives, and had found Him in Christ after death. As we reasoned thus together, spirits interested in our subject of conversation gathered one by one about us. There were those who had been Hindoos, Thibetans, Manchurians, Siamese, Malays, Turks, Persians, Jews, Shintoists, Fetishists, and even American Mental Scientists. These were all testifying that they only needed to come to know Christ aright in either life, and they had irresistibly been drawn to put their whole trust in Him. There was no din: each was perfectly distinct in utterance; yet it all came upon us as a mass of testimony that was overwhelming. "How strange," exclaimed Addison Alexander, "that we have been living along beside all these people in heaven; some of them treasuring the most wonderful stories to tell; and have allowed ourselves to become absorbed in language study,

in abstruse questions of theology, in historical research; when we might worthily have been interesting ourselves in all these new-born souls."

"Is not this what the life of heaven needs," questioned Joseph Cook, "to save it from a certain aimlessness after all?"

"I think we serve our Master best even by following the bent He gives us," Father counseled. "We can live for each other in many thousand ways. And all the stores of wisdom and of knowledge we have gained can be made useful in perfecting other souls. Certainly we have witnessed to-day that which will make us more eager and hopeful by far in the work of saving immortal souls, in whatsoever part of His great vineyard the Master may elect to place us."

"But oh how much more hopeful and eager we would have been in saving men on earth," I exclaimed, "if we could have looked forward to what we have learned to-day! If we could only have believed that the meager results we were achieving were just the little gleanings in a great harvest field extending across both worlds, and just the first fruits of a mighty ingathering which would extend out into eternity!"

"That reminds me of what I was saying when our Boston friend was drawn to us," Doctor Hitchcock suggested. "That the great unsupplied need of your generation was a credible, preachable eschatology. Not only to nerve our own hearts for what often seemed a losing battle; but

also to present the real issues of eternity, the real gain of immediate and hearty repentance, the real terrors of outraged law, the awful risk of stifling conscience, the ages of living which may be lost in hardness of heart, in rebellion against omnipotence, and in bitter, needless repining, as the result of a single wilful choice; when we might as well have been happy in God's love all that lost time; the eternity of regret which must shadow our heaven at last, after a life of obdurate continuance in sin; the ten-fold harder task of repentance and undoing; the cruelty of delaying love's glad consummation. A shorter hell, perhaps, but really a hotter."

"Was not this the thing most needful," asked Socrates, who had lingered with us, "for men to learn to know that to be out of connection with the Deity in spirit is to be already now beforehand in the purlieus of hell?"

"And the hell will be just as æonian as the separation of spirit," Joseph Cook murmured; "no matter how much glamour Satan may contrive to throw around it."

"And may we not think," suggested Alexander, "that to some of the lost spirits in hell, their torment, in comparison with the brevity of the mortal life on earth, may already have been fairly æonian? Eternity has its depth as well as its length. How long was an hour when you suffered with toothache?"

"The most obdurate timidity of the theologian

from age to age," Hitchcock reflected, "has been the fear of not sufficiently limiting the love and mercy of our God. To the mediæval mind it was inconceivable that the atonement of our Lord could avail for the instant pardon of the sinner without much penance, frequent intercession of saints and Virgin, and ages of Purgatory besides. I wonder if we doctors of the Nineteenth Century may not have unconsciously experienced a touch of the same ague of an over anxious orthodoxy, as we stood shivering on the brink of the full conception that 'His mercy endureth forever.'"

But Father protested. "I cannot say that I altogether like your metaphor, Doctor," he said. "I consider that it was a sound and healthy hesitancy which we felt to let down the bars our Master Himself had put up. We must be true to His word."

"To His whole word in its whole spirit, Brother," Mozoomdar protested very gently. "Not merely to the apparent side teaching of one or two parables; but to the mighty unity of purpose in the Scriptures to set forth Christ's work of redemption as the one great universal, eternal, all-compensating, all-explaining movement running through and through the evanescent ages of sin and sorrow. Can He who crowned his earthly life work by that instant answer to the penitent murderer, 'This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise,' whose spirit hastened from the lifeless body left hanging upon the cross in order that it

might go and preach a finished atonement and an achieved salvation to spirits in hell's prison; can He who is the same yesterday, to-day and forever, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, ever fail to be everywhere the world's Redeemer, still going about doing good, still come to seek and to save that which was lost?"

A silence fell upon us with this uttered thought. To me it was like the flush of a more glorious dawn spreading over heaven's noon-day sky. It was Addison Alexander who spoke at last. "God's word has always shown itself possessed of more and greater dimensions than man's reason," he said. "Just as we have held to the thought-transcending fact of the Trinity, and to the seeming contradictions of God's sovereignty and man's free will; so may we not in wisdom humbly hold both to eternal punishment and to eternal probation, into these things, like the angels, desiring to look, and striving in our keenest analysis, in our widest grasp of thought, at least to know why we may not fully know the complete unity of truth?"

Then, like Elihu, the Buzite, I could hold in no longer. "Fathers, Brothers!" I exclaimed, "I could gladly linger and listen to your high discourse on these themes of thought while heaven's school term holds open; but after what we have seen and heard this morning, I am now fully decided, as I have long and wistfully yearned, by God's great leave and furtherance, to go myself to hell, and see the reality, and help, if possible, to

save some in whose unknown fate I am intensely concerned."

"Oh, my boy, my boy!" Father cautioned, with a touch of soul like the dear hand of former days laid upon my shoulder, "you were often, apparently, prone to wish to do things because they were odd and peculiar and different from the actions of other people. I would have you beware lest this surviving impulse, rather than the consciousness of a call and a mission, may be moving you to this strange decision. I would not have my son come to be known as the crank of heaven."

"Let Prester follow his star," Doctor Hitchcock counseled kindly. "I was about to say to him that God could save the lost souls in hell without his aid; then I remembered Carey. We have this treasure in what were once earthen vessels. Throughout the history of redemption in our own world the Holy Spirit worked mainly with and through men in saving men."

CHAPTER III

I realized now that my only hope of ever reaching hell was to get very near to Christ: He has the keys of hell and of death. Yes, I know that means the keys of Hades, but one of those is the key of the bottomless pit. Often had I searched, and often had I wondered, "where is hell?" But with the freedom of the universe, during more than twelve decades by mortal time, since dying, I had not gotten nearer to hell any where than before that at Five Points on a Saturday night, or in the visitors' gallery looking down on the New York Stock Exchange. Hell must be some sort of prison; and in all God's wondrous cosmos I had found no bounds or bars but those set by infinity to finite knowing. Hell must be some very dark and loveless place; I found God's world thrilling with His love and light. I could see sin abounding in some other planets; but in each of these, through the atoning work of the world's only Redeemer, I found that grace did much more abound.

So I could see no way to get to hell, but to climb down the ladder of prayer. Wistfully I drew closer and closer to my Saviour, telling Him over and over that I knew myself unworthy of this high boon and mission. "I only crave to be where Thou art," was my plea. "I would indeed follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. If Thou

art not in hell as a merciful Saviour, and busiest there of all places; I could not dare to go." I often thought of Peter asking leave to walk upon the water, in the spirit of adventure, to get to Christ, and in his self-confidence beginning to sink. I prayed to be made entirely free from that spirit of adventure, of which I was painfully self-conscious, and often reminded by those who knew me and loved me most; but to my most earnest prayer for a change of heart in this respect there would come the answer of a good conscience that the spirit of adventure was all right as a motive in its place.

"You know, dear Boy, that was really what made you go and pray in the saloons in Tiptleton," my wife would remind me. "And try to organize Christian unity in Churchville," Mother would add. "And join that coöperative colony of the Knights of Labor in Minnesota," Father would sigh in concert.

"I believe there was a sanctified and consecrated spirit of adventure in Livingstone and Carey, and John Knox, and Wendell Philips, and pretty nearly every man or woman whose life has amounted to much for God and for the new works of new days," I would answer stoutly. Indeed, the revulsion of feeling which would sometimes come over me at the thought of hell's awfulness, would warn me that I had none too much of the daredevil in my make-up for a would-be invader of hell. Over and over my Master's answer would

come to me that there really was nothing between me and the summit of my ambition to reach hell but the need of a greater, deeper, steadier compulsion of longing to save lost souls there. Two spirits came to me as I was musing and praying in one of the vast solitudes of the southern stellar universe. The one was swarthy and strange, different from any race I had yet met; the other so fair and radiant, his presence stirred the backward reach of memory to recall the very cheeriest, calmest, strongest souls I had ever known. "We have been together somewhere," I said in greeting, "but I think only for a short time. Then after that something terrible and glorious happened which made the thought of you sacred and tender."

"You are recalling the Saturday afternoon we spent with each other in the glen above Tippetton," my visitor answered. "I am John Roger Peale, and in less than a year after that Rebecca and I and three others were martyred at Lien Chou."

It all came back to me vividly at once, the mellow light of the October afternoon, the gay leaves dropping on hill-slope and stream, the swirling sheen of the Altamere leaping ledges, twisting around great rocks. Every reply of our conversation came freshly to mind, as if we were but just holding it. "How hard I tried to find some reluctance in your soul in view of the work set before you," I reminded my friend in heaven.

“ It looked all so joyous in anticipation ; and all the years of study and of preparation and the vacations spent in travel among our churches — so little chance for home life or rest, or enjoyment, or loved companionship, with little but toil and hardship and privation to look forward to — these seemed only a part of the zest of the game to you. I could not get you to let me pity you even a little bit. I have often wondered how it must seem to you to look back upon from heaven. What a disappointment it must have been to find yourself ushered through that one glorious day of martyrdom tamely into paradise when you had but just reached your mission field ; without the opportunity even of settling down to one day’s work and study, without one soul won from all the millions of China to make heaven complete for you. How do you interpret God’s plan now in looking back on those years of costly preparation, the turning away from every earthly allurements, the sacrifice wrung from loving hearts left to bleed for you, the journey to the heart of the antipodes, and nothing come of it all? ”

It was the same debonaire smile which impressed me on earth that answered my question now. “ China would have been great, if God had willed it,” he replied, “ but that was small potatoes and few in a hill compared to mission work in hell.”

There were tears in my soul then in the wave of gratitude that drew me to clasp his thought and

purpose. "Our Master has sent you," I cried, "and you are going to tell me how and when I can come, too. And this brother who is with you, he, too, has some message for me. He, too, has some acquaintance with hell."

"I was born there," was the other's answer.

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The universe reeled around me. "Where is there any hope?" was the first sentence I could articulate. I was not unfamiliar with the budding of souls in heaven: the sacred joy of parenthood given to some who had not known that joy on earth; but in all my dreams of hell I had not contemplated the awful possibility of reproduction among lost souls. Brought thus suddenly soul to soul with one whose existence had begun under the taint of hell's heredity, my own soul fainted before this new, appalling hugeness of the problem of evil.

"Brother," Peale said, "there were tens of thousands being born in heathenism every day in China, and we were converting perhaps a score or two each day at the time that I was studying up on my anticipated field of work there. All our converts were mortals, and the influence of each for Christ in China came to an end with the little span of life. It often seemed like sprinkling a little salt upon the current of a wide, swift river. But after a little more than a century and a half, look there and see China, a great, homogeneous, evangelical Christian nation, orthodox,

staunch, loyal to Christ. The souls we win in hell are immortals, leavening immortals. Never despair."

I questioned the other one about that. "When you are saved," I asked, "are you not saved out of hell into heaven?"

"I would dread losing heaven," he answered, "if I did not keep on working in hell. I find the highest heaven in the deepest hell."

"If that is the way you feel about it," I reflected, "ought not we whose early advantages have been, shall I say, somewhat more favorable: I hope I am not wounding your feelings; ought we not also to take an interest in your birthplace that we too may win the highest heaven?"

"I believe many of you will come to it yet," he answered. "You have not quite the reasons, such as I possess, for yearning over our sad nether world."

"I am one that cares," I answered, "I want you to take me right back with you."

"Brother Prester, we can't take you to hell," Peale answered, "You have just got to take yourself there."

"But how?" I asked, "I have been trying so long to find out how."

"Just by loving," was my friend's reply. "You have missed it somehow just because it was so simple." Then he went on to tell me something of his own experience. "When we found ourselves, Rebecca and I, so suddenly in heaven," he

let me see him remember, "out of that howling, cruel, crazy mob, and in the company of all the redeemed, and angels thrilled and stirred to heaven's bounds by the ordeal through which they had just seen us passing; when we felt our heart-wounds kissed by sobbing spirits melted down in love and pity for us, looked upon each other unscathed, immortal, crowned with martyrdom, clad in white robes of the spirit, close to God's throne, close to His heart, to whom we had been softly praying just a few moments before down there by the river in Lien Chou, not dead at all but alive! alive! forever more, thought and love not lost, but wonderfully quickened, infinitely widened, preserved by union with God's own eternal thinking and loving, when we found each one safe; dear heroic Doctor Eleanor, Mrs. Machle, little Amy, gathered fondly in heaven's embrace; when the first ten years' thrill of it all had left room in our hearts for other thoughts we were astonished to feel a certain blankness even in the bliss of heaven. Doctor Chestnut came upon me hovering over Lien Chou. 'What, moping in heaven!' she exclaimed in her cheery way.

"'I am just puzzled,' I replied, 'I simply can't get the syllogism of it all. If it were you alone, I could understand. You had accomplished an inspiring work in China, and your strength could not have held out more than five years longer at the rate you were going. But for us two, who hardly got to speak a word of Chinese, it's all

right, I know, but our earth-life seems somehow to have lost its meaning.'

" 'Do you feel that you could envy the men and women here who are carrying on our work in Lien Chou?' she asked.

" 'I would gladly change places with them this minute,' I answered.

" 'How do you really think I feel?' she asked then. 'Do you think you had gotten to feel more interest in the Chinese in a month of travel among them than I in those years of work with their sick souls and bodies? Do you suppose that eleven years of foreign mission work was enough for me out of my eternity?'

" 'Surely, you don't mean that you are not satisfied in heaven,' I said reluctantly. 'Would you like to be back at the old task that was already killing you by inches? Could you go back and spend another year like the one in which you were all alone with hospital and church and school in inner China?'

" 'I could very gladly,' she replied, 'but I have found a better job.' Then she told me how the prayer for her murderers which was trembling on her lips when the last merciless blow was struck had lingered in her soul in paradise, and the pity with which she had stooped to bind up the forehead of the little Chinese boy wounded in the mob, as blows and curses were falling upon her, had only deepened in her soul in glory; how she had followed her murderers to their execution, and

loved them and longed over their vanishing spirits, as she had yearned over so many brought in extremity to the hospital and dying there without a knowledge of the Saviour; until in utter self-forgetfulness of pity, she had found herself among them all in hell. 'I did not ask to be sent on my mission to hell,' she said, 'it was something I had never thought of. I just got there by loving some poor souls that had gone there. I was never more astonished in all my existence. I was scared, and yet so glad!' And there she had fallen to work, binding up lacerated spirits, resetting souls that were out of joint, rubbing into them the healing influences of God's infinite love in a merciful Saviour. 'Oh, I've been having good times in hell, Brother!' she told me.

"'But we've never missed you from heaven,' I protested, 'and you haven't talked about being away any of the time.'

"'No, I have been happy, oh, so happy! in heaven all the time,' she explained. 'But I couldn't tell you about the other life because you had not grown quite enough interested.'

"This struck me square. Was it possible that I had been going backward in heaven? I had continued to study China with even greater interest than before I went there to die. But I had seen a hundred millions of her people weaken and leave the world, and the idea had never popped into my head that I might go to hell and meet some of them with the message of salvation. 'Never mind,

Brother,' Doctor Chestnut said gently, 'men are slow, and they can't help it. You have been broadening in many ways, and getting a new preparation for the greatest work of all. You have lost ten years in China; but you can make it up ten times over in one year of winning Chinese souls in hell.'

"I wondered how that could be. 'I can understand that there may be no language to learn,' I replied, 'for I suppose lost souls think to each other without words as we do here in heaven; but surely they must be further from God there than on earth, and more hopeless in their environment, and more fixed in their character, with the permanence of eternity.'

"But she answered me, 'Have you forgotten Our Lord's words, "He that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes?" Has he never talked that over with you? The heathen in hell are like immigrants in a strange country. The hold of old ideas is loosened. Old customs that were largely external no longer shape their thoughts. Chinese spirits have no cues to wear and no feet to bind. The ancestors they once worshipped have now become their contemporaries. Every thing is new to them, and they are ready for new errors which Satan may teach them, or equally for the new, glad tidings of great joy which the Holy Spirit helps us to make plain to them. The Devil has to begin his work on them almost all over again

from the start; so we have a chance to get in even with him.'

"And so I have found it," Peale concluded, "during the century and a half by earth's sun which I have spent in happy mission work among unsaved Chinese spirits down below. The missionaries who are doing the hard, up-hill work in hell are not those assigned to the spirits of former heathen, but it is those who are trying to do something with the damned from Christendom, gospel-hardened even in hell, people who have known the truth all through their earthly lives, and are not surprised in eternity to find it true; but they have grown adept in hardening their hearts against God's truth. There are first to hear the gospel that shall be last to accept it."

"But these are the ones whose fate interests me most," I suggested. "I cannot get them out of my mind. Face after face rises before me; people I could accomplish little for on earth. Soul-winning in the most refined, exclusive circles of hell could not be much slower than such work in connection with some of our churches. But I feel that if it were only one won from Satan's sad domain, that would be well worth an eternity of patient seeking."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Brother," Peale replied. "It shows that you are not far from the kingdom of hell. I have been concerned for fear you might never reach hell after all. Pardon me, you seemed to be almost as much

interested in Nathaniel Prester's intended mission as in the lost souls to be saved. But I believe you are now coming to the point where you can wish with Paul almost that you yourself might be accursed for your brethren's sake, that they might be saved. When you love these brothers in hell so much that you will be willing even to have your own soul singed in their lake of fire, if only you can be made an instrument for salvation to some of them; although all heaven may not get thrilled right away with the knowledge of your endeavor; why then I think, for any other drawbacks in your case, you may expect to get your commission in due time."

"How you must see through me!" I exclaimed, even with tears of the soul. "You make me realize how far I am yet from being made perfect in love. I fear it has ever been my disposition to dream noble things rather than do them all day long. I do wish to be different, but I forget so often."

"It is not for me to judge you, Brother," Peale answered, "only we cannot speak anything but the truth in heaven. I noticed you weren't really chummy with the companion I brought with me, and so, in spite of all your enthusiasm in the abstract to go slumming in hell, I wondered how you could stand its actual, prosaic contact. We found in foreign mission work that the enthusiastic, excitable dreamers soon wore out. It was the dull, phlegmatic fellows, rather, that went plod-

ding ahead, stood the rub, got used to the heathen, and saved them."

"You mean that I must get to be chummy with the damned, even before I convert them?"

"Certainly. It must be 'Hail fellow, well-met!' or no converts at all. Was not our Master reproached as the friend of sinners?"

"I wish I could call your hell-born friend back," I said contritely, "I'm sorry I lost touch with him. How much I could learn from him!"

"Perhaps he will be the one sent to lead you when you are quite ready for the plunge," was Peale's encouraging answer. "God bless you, Brother, and make you worthy of this His highest calling in Christ Jesus."

After that I began to pray not quite so much for myself that I might be led to hell; for somehow I seemed to lose my anxiety about that; as for one and another individual friend of the earth-life whose presence we had missed in heaven. Over and over, out into the gloom of uncertainty which overhung their fate, my heart's cry to God's tender omnipresence was that they might be saved. It seemed of less consequence by whose instrumentality this might be accomplished; only I prayed to be ready if the call came to me; and it seemed in some of their cases at least that I ought to be the one to go and seek them out; for I could see now that it had been by reason of a sad lack of chumminess on my part they had missed being saved on earth. I recalled the first funeral at

which I had dared to pray for the presumably unrepentant soul of the deceased. "What was the use of praying for Mr. Chartier now?" my eldest son, Thoughtful, asked me when I came home from the cemetery.

"I wanted to do something more for him, and I couldn't think of anything else to do."

"I think you had done enough for him. Haven't you been praying for him ever since you came here? Didn't you pray with him and work with him the other time he was sick before he had this stroke? What good did it all do?"

"And the next caller he had brought him the bottle!" I exclaimed sorrowfully.

"Do you think he may be where praying for him may do more good now?" Thoughtful asked.

"At any rate he is out of the reach of bottles," I contended.

"But in hell, where the old Devil has everything his own way, don't you suppose he could fix up something just as alluring as whiskey?"

"I have my doubts about whether the Devil has everything his own way in hell," I replied. "Would God be God, and let him?"

"He comes near enough to having it in Tiptleton," Thoughtful moralized; "but doesn't the Bible say that no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven?"

"Certainly, not; unless he reforms, like all the other kinds of evil doers on Paul's list."

“What chance would he have of reforming in hell any more than in Tiptleton?”

“If Chartier had let the grace of God into his heart, he might easily have reformed even in Tiptleton,” I answered. “Other men have done that in worse places. Jesus is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God through him. I ought not to be talking to you in a way to unsettle your views, my Boy; but the question that keeps coming into my soul is, ‘Why not unto the uttermost hell?’ There was nothing wrong with poor Chartier, aside from the drink; a kinder, truer heart rarely beat in a human breast. And just now before Satan has time to get a new clinch on his soul, ought not our prayers to follow him with redoubled earnestness? When I think of how much more frequently I might have sought his company and tried to help him; my heart aches, and I’ve just got to pray that God will forgive me and still save him in some way.”

Thoughtful was silent for a while. “Yes, but Papa,” at last he said, with some hesitation, “if we can make ourselves feel easier by praying for people after they are dead for not doing all we could to save them while they were living, won’t that make us that much more apt to neglect the next unsaved ones, and to think we can let them slide, and still they may get saved in eternity some-way?”

“On the contrary,” I answered stoutly, “the

thought of having just this brief moment to snatch men from the certainty of eternal perdition, I believe, is what paralyzes the activities of so many Christians to-day. It makes the Devil seem so strong and God so weak. It gives Satan all eternity to wreak his fell purposes; while the Saviour is left with a handbreadth's time in which to succor men against all the wiles of the Adversary, against the dull inertia of ignorance, superstition, prejudice, stupidity, against the downward drag of vice and animalism, oppression, hatred, and that whole obdurate wrongness of human affairs which we may well call original sin. For my part, it is this larger hope of a continued work of redemption which first began to give me courage to try to save men. Before it came to me, I stood like one under the oppression of a nightmare watching a vast resistless tide of evil sweeping men and women and children swiftly toward eternal despair. I tried to speak in warning; but my tongue would not move. I tried to stretch out a hand to save even one; but my arm hung limp by my side. The odds were too terribly against the attempt. It is only since I have begun to hope that the little I may be able to do to save men here is a part of God's great line of business for the redemption of His whole universe, and that He intends the vast job to go on out into eternity to the driving of the last spike, that my heart has gotten light enough for effective service. Now, when I have to bury a man without having suc-

ceeded in bringing him around to my way of thinking and my trust in the Saviour of sinners, I find I can still pray for him cheerily, leave him with the eternal Redeemer who loves him more truly and wisely than I have ever managed to do, and then turn with undiminished courage to the next sinner to be saved. I pray the Master to show me the truth or falsehood of these new thoughts by the way they work out in my own zeal for His service. Before these hopes came to me I could not forget the things behind or reach out to those before. My mind was continually on the rack thinking of the mistakes and failures I had made in dealing with men and of the unfaithfulness of which I had been guilty in the case of one and another, until I was depressed and unnerved with the awful thought that a soul's eternity had been hopelessly ruined by my slip. Eternity is solemn enough to face with the care of souls, without the horror of fixed despair over their fate."

My son had one more question for me. "But how about those bad men that heard you pray for Mr. Chartier in the church this morning?" he asked. "How about the liquor men that were his pall-bearers? Won't they say, 'Well, it's all right for Chartier: the Dominie's prayed him into heaven. And we'll get there the same way at last, maybe.' Perhaps they will think they can go on ruining men as fast as they please, and then, out in eternity, their drunkards will get so-

bered up and saved somehow, and they won't have to answer for them."

I was hard bested for an answer, as we often are to the question of a child. After some reflection I suggested that we might similarly reason about the enemies of Christ that they could take comfort from his dying prayer for their forgiveness from the Father and say, "It's all right: we've got him out of the way, and he's asked God not to do anything to us for killing him." People do not carp and criticise when their hearts are softened. Some of those triumphant persecutors were so moved by Christ's prayer, "Father, forgive them!" that they were ready on Peter's first accusation of their guilt in killing Jesus to be pricked in their hearts and cry, "What shall we do?"

"Suppose I had said to my congregation at the funeral," I suggested to Thoughtful, "'Our friend, Chartier, we have strong reason to believe, is now in hell for all eternity. And you devils in human shape that sold him the liquor have put him there.' One proof of the truth or falsehood of a doctrine is whether we can faithfully and kindly declare it anywhere. Nobody could quite believe that this hard-working, gentle, kindly man, who never intentionally harmed anyone but himself, is now to spend an unending eternity in torment for what was largely the result of untoward conditions about his life. The theory of the future life that I am beginning to believe is

one which I could have unfolded right there to weeping relatives and sorrowing friends, as well as to those wicked enslavers of men, and all would have felt the majesty, the unalterable working of God's law, and the triumphs of His grace, here and hereafter. They would have wept for Chartier and prayed for him with a fervor of mingled hope and fear which is denied them now by the thought-paralyzing effect of a doctrine of fixed and endless retribution which no one could really believe without going mad. I begin to think we ought to preach continued redemption just to get men interested in eternity again, and to make hell real to them. I didn't pray Chartier into heaven, as they all very well know. It was because I was deeply concerned for his fate, that I just had to pray for him."

So I found myself praying for him again in heaven, after my son himself had grown to be an old man on earth, and had come to us to renew these high themes of talk in the glory land. A new baptism of the spirit of prayer came upon me after that interview with Peale. I prayed for Rorer, and for Elder Smiley, who died, to all appearances, the same smirking, pious fraud he had been all his life. I prayed for Lou Sawyer and for Doctor Charlie Lovejoy, two suicides from drink, buried out of one congregation in less than a year. One after another, I prayed for scores of those for whose salvation I had wrestled in vain on earth; and my heart went out in earnest

longing to God for the souls of men and women in whose lives or thoughts I had become interested, but whom I had never known on earth or met in heaven: Paine, Ingersoll, Voltaire, Alexander Hamilton, Charlotte Corday, Brigham Young, Lord Byron, Poe, General Weyler, Thomas Jefferson, Warren Hastings, Captain Kidd, some of the multi-millionaire church members of frenzied finance and beef-trust fame who were my earthly contemporaries, and a great many other interesting people whom I felt that I would like to know, none of whom I wished to think of as burning in hell forever. Then there were near kindred after the flesh, and playmates of childhood, dear for old association's sake; my boyhood's chum, Hatchet Ecchols, who joined the church with me and grew up to be an infidel; pretty, timid, little Sadie Wells, who married him; Joy's cousin, Albert, who was jealous of me in our younger days; yet he was the one whom she came to give her life to, after all. Nightly, in my boyhood, I prayed for Joy that God would give her a worthy husband some day, and then I would pray wistfully that I might dream of her that night. Afterwards, when we were engaged, it seemed that I would need to strive very earnestly indeed in order that my boyhood's prayer might find an answer. And then when the strangeness of separation came, after our supreme renunciation, and still I dreamed of her by night, and the grey years came and went and I heard she

had married Albert, I often prayed for him that he might love her Saviour and truly have a share in her soul's life. Joy had long been to Jeanie and me our dearest fellow creature in heaven, and now it was one of my greatest encouragements that she was beginning to talk to us about Albert. "I feel that you will soon be in hell, Brother Nat," she would say; "promise me you will look for Albert first."

Indeed the partition wall was growing thinner between my soul and hell as the old love for lost ones stirred within. Now there came times when I would hear strange far-away minor chords stealing in with the jubilant music of heaven, faint muffled echoes of wailing voices that thrilled me with intenser longing. And sometimes as I prayed there would come a change over the glory of heaven's light, like the bodeful sheen of clouds over red at sunset before a storm, while unexplained shadows beckoned and stretched thin hands appealingly. And I would feel around and beneath me earthquake quavers of infinite unrest; yet even while I was shrinking and saying to myself, "Is this a part of hell?" God would give his answer of love to my prayer for manhood to brave it all, more distinct than we ever felt God's answer when we prayed in the body of flesh, and there would come a deeper peace within than even heaven had ever given.

"Perhaps it will be with you, dear Boy," Jeanie suggested encouragingly when I told her

of one of these visions, "perhaps it will be with you as it was with Job. Heaven to your soul's great longing just now is only a sweet captivity. But you know the Lord turned again the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends."

CHAPTER IV

“What is this frightful din?” I shouted with all my might into the swarthy soul of my guide as we plunged cheerily down into hell. “Is it a vast loom-room, a whip factory, a boiler works, or is hell the central stock exchange sure enough?”

He explained that these clanging sounds were the angry thoughts of lost spirits around us. Presently I began to distinguish oaths. It was so long since I had heard such a thing that I came near rebounding out of hell. “Hold down!” cried my guide, clutching me, “profanity is no more horrible, essentially, in hell than it was on earth.”

“If you wish me to become so familiar with it, that I won’t mind it,” I answered reluctantly, “that would seem to be going backward in the Christian life, back of where I stood on earth. I always did, even in my skeptical days, hold this vice to be the most gratuitous, the most senseless, the most purely devilish, the basest, the most despicable —”

“Come, come, brother!” my companion interrupted hastily and in evident alarm. “If you get angry in the midst of hell’s anger, you are in danger of being caught in the mesh of hell’s affinities. This is Satan’s first snare for your soul.”

"God is angry with the wicked every day," I quoted, only half appeased.

"Yet still he loves them. It was for just this sort that Jesus died. We must not be overcome with this evil, but overcome it with good. Hold strongly to Christ and his aloofness of loving hateful ones, or you may find yourself out of hell for good, or out of heaven for a time, if that is possible for one kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

"Is it like this always here?" I asked wonderingly.

"There are all sorts in hell," was the answer; "that is, all unredeemed sorts. Many hate the noise, and that makes hate's noise the louder. Many enjoy it in a way, and keep it up with all varieties of ingenious discord. Some have not character or life enough left to hate: they crawl over each other in numb and slimy indifference. Each finds his like; consequently those who dislike each other most are constantly drawn together by an affinity of aversion. I was born here eight hundred years ago of earth's circlings round her sun. I have never known that boon of weary mortals, sleep. It was mostly like this until the peace of God that passeth understanding began to keep my heart and mind in the knowledge of Christ Jesus. For forty years I have been an evangelist and trophy of God's redeeming grace in hell, and it has seemed comparatively quiet here

since the noise died out of the inside of my soul."

I began to reverence Peale's dusky friend as more a saint than any of us. I asked him if he had ever murmured at the strange providence which had appointed to him to be born in this horrible place. "Every condition has its compensations," he answered smiling, "and shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, 'What makest thou?' Seven hundred and sixty years of darkest hell were short to end in the blessedness I have known these forty years of trust in Jesus. You used to sing a hymn:

"Earth has a joy unknown to heaven;
The new-born peace of souls forgiven.
Tears of such rich and pure delight,
Ye angels, never dimmed your sight."

"By similar reasoning you may well conclude that hell has a joy unknown to all the universe beside. Angels listen to our story as they do not even listen to yours."

"Where are all the people in hell?" I asked my guide presently. "I have the feeling, like a deep sea diver, of an infinite mass; but I cannot perceive any individual spirits."

"That is because you have not come by practice to sympathize and intersphere with any particular one," he answered. "I have recognized scores of old acquaintances already. Haven't you felt the rub yet?"

"I experienced a slight sensation just now,"

I answered. "It was somewhat grating, like the lick of a cow's tongue."

"That was the rub of a passing spirit," my companion explained. "Just as in heaven, where souls are seeking each other's welfare, the touch of each soul is a thrill of pleasure; so here in hell, where each, for the most part, is bent on his own purposes and following his own designs, spirits mostly rub each other the wrong way. The rub may be slight, and quite unintentionally given; but in the aggregate they keep the soul's cuticle raw and sore."

I asked him if there was no love in hell, and he was explaining to me that much which went by that name there was mixed with selfish exclusiveness, with jealousy and burning lust of spirits, and marred by changefulness and insincerity; when in my grief and pity for it all I saw something that made me exclaim in interruption, "Do look at that singular creature!" Presently I began to see thousands of them. I tried to express to my guide how they impressed me. "They are like human faces," I said, "but they are faces distorted as though seen in concave, convex, imperfect mirrors. I see them as if through a waving current of hot air; they do not keep the same shape; I see them in curved and broken lines that continually change. Now the faces are elongated, now they are broadened; now one is dimpled, now it is puckered; now it expresses one exaggerated trait, now another. They confuse me.

I am ashamed to say, they frighten me somewhat."

"Those are the lies in each soul," again explained my guide. "I see you are fast getting into the inwardness of hell. All hearts here, as everywhere, are open to sympathy, if you can only really feel it. When you have learned to see them clearer in sympathetic insight, you will find a more fixed expression of individuality in each, the real self behind the mask. Always talk to that."

"I wonder why you do not inquire about the smell," my new friend asked presently.

"I felt embarrassed," was my answer. "It puzzles, while it sickens me. I was prepared for brimstone; but carrion! How can I!"

"Hell is the lazzar house of putrifying souls," my friend sorrowfully replied. "Every impure thought and impulse here emits its odor of corruption. The cancer and the leprosy of sin are everywhere."

"Is there no disinfectant or deodorizer?" I gasped. "And are not the victims themselves distressed by it?"

"Fix your attention upon pure thoughts," was his counsel. "There is no other relief. Live above hell while you live in it. The horror of this stench to those from whom it emanates is that they half love, half loathe it. It fills hell with attractions and repulsions of equal wretchedness. You will find presently that each soul has its own

scent. But the more you love and pity each, the less personal distress you will experience."

I was appalled at the numbers of the throng at hand, suggestive of the density of hell's population. Heaven had seemed truly like a city for its vast concourse of souls redeemed from every kindred and tongue and nation and people, from every habitable planet, and from all the ages since Satan first fell, with the innumerable company of angels, and the citizens of those principalities and dukedoms in the heavenlies which had never known sin or sorrow; but when I compared the frequent meetings of heaven's golden streets of love radiating outward toward the rim of immensity from that great white throne which itself was everywhere — when I compared all that with the appalling welter of hell of which I was beginning to be conscious, I exclaimed to my new friend, "We are still in the minority. Heaven is sparse, heaven is countrified; this is the city!"

"All this helps us to think how great heaven will be at last," he answered. "Here in hell we are back among the crude beginnings: we are among those former things which in heaven are passed away."

"But how could we ever have faced the thought," I exclaimed again, "that our merciful God intended all these millions of millions to go on like this to all eternity with no further effort to convince and save them!"

"For all that, they must go on for the most

part like this until one by one they each make an individual surrender to God. There is no way out of here but through the wicket gate. The wonderful thing is that any of them should have been willing to stand it so long, rather than begin life anew in repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

I was recovering from my first chill of horror, and filled with eagerness to make my first convert. How to find Albert and keep my promise to Joy was the next problem.

"Is it at all possible out of this vast haystack," I asked wonderingly, "to extract the one little needle of the individual soul you are looking for? I hardly suppose there can be a directory; for they all seem to be eternally on the move."

"Our Father has the directory," my companion replied. "Each soul here is known to him. Each is his child, his prodigal. But if you wish to find some particular acquaintance, just love him. Love draws a long way in hell by reason of its scarcity. That is why we are pressed upon by such a throng. The novelty of our pity draws them from far and near. The probability is that no one in hell is really loving the one you wish to see very dearly just at this juncture, and your love will be the sufficient magnet to draw this needle out of the haystack."

My dusky friend now suggested that his presence could hardly help me to fix my desires on the spirit I wished to see; and as there was an anx-

ious soul calling him very earnestly from a great distance he felt that he had better bid me adieu for the present and come back to me again whenever I earnestly needed him.

"Many thanks, dear brother," I said, "and the Lord be with you."

"And with thy spirit!" was the affectionate answer.

So I found myself alone in hell. Around were these elusive foreigners, millions of them apparently, and not one to whom I could trust myself safely; while with them came a sinister, all-pervading, entirely hostile presence, the Father of Evil. If I had not cried earnestly to God for help at that moment, I might have found myself slinking ingloriously back from hell. I had all the old familiar childish sensation of my hair standing on end. But soon there came to me, as to Kate Guinness, weary and lonely after a day's itinerating in central China, the memory and the realization of our Master's promise — only with a wider meaning — "Go ye into all the *kosmos*, and preach the gospel to *every* creature; and lo! I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS." Christ said to me plainly, "Speak to them: I am with thee." First I let my heart go out to them all, and its trembling quivered into deep compassion like that of our Saviour when he saw the multitudes lacerated and driven about as sheep having no shepherd. I could see that they dimly felt my pity. The clamor of harsh thoughts abated somewhat.

Then a great exultation seized me as I compared, with a swift backward glance of memory, the ease of gathering a crowd in hell with the meagerness of some of the congregations it had been my lot to address on the theme of salvation back on earth.

"This is far and away ahead of Churchville," I said to myself with keen satisfaction, and moved by old association, I began by singing them the soul-melody of one of heaven's gospel hymns, wishing that I might have brought Strong along to do it better. The effect surprised me. There came a ring of partial silence away back in hell. Perhaps it was the effect of the utter inexperience of a new immigrant, the feeling of my simplicity, as an audience will listen to some little child. I was never so glad in my life. I said to my Master, "Just tell me what to say, and I'll say it." The joy of the preacher came upon me mightily. I told them they could easily see I was an entire stranger: I had no idea what sort of oratory they were in the habit of listening to: I could not even see any of them quite distinctly: but I wanted to try and let them know that I loved them; that my great longing was to help them each and all to a true understanding of my Saviour, Jesus, the only name under heaven given among men, or other created beings, whereby we must be saved. "He is your Shepherd," I said; "you are his sheep. You are not the Devil's own. You belong to Jesus. He is seeking for each one of you through all this wilderness of

sin, through all these centuries of your wandering UNTIL He finds you. Won't you let Him find you and save you just now? How much longer are you going to keep Him seeking? He is bound to save you before you get through with Him. You know you want to be saved, too. Are you not nearly tired of all this? You are missing all the good times. I would like to tell you we are having good times around the throne of God. We had good times in the love of God back on earth, and we tried hard to make some of you see it, and understand, and crave a part in our blessing. You lost all your earthly life, those of you who had an earthly life; and now you are fast losing your eternity. I begin to perceive that I have seen some of you before. With some of you I have pleaded, although not half urgently enough, I know, that you would make your peace with God. I cannot just call your names yet; old memories stir somewhat confusedly within me; but I have a feeling that in one place and another I have warned you of what you have come to here. Others, no doubt, have had their warnings from faithful lips. I cannot believe the memory of those dear old days has quite died out of any of your souls. Go back in thought to that plain meeting house where the proffer of God's mercy in Jesus Christ was often held out to you. Look around and see the familiar faces. Some of them were far from perfect Christians, no doubt; but they cared for

your soul, and some of them earnestly endeavored to save you. Think of the best men and women you knew. Wouldn't you like to meet them again? Brother, it's not too late, maybe, yet. Think of your kind teacher in the Bible school. Think of one or two who passed the communion plate and cup in the little country church. They never wished to pass you by. They would far rather have you with them now in heaven. Think of the faithful man who over and over gave you the simple Gospel message from the pulpit, and who often spoke to you so kindly to win you to Christ. Wouldn't you like to be back in the dear old days, and have that offer of salvation made to you again? Recall the time when you were most deeply impressed; when your soul's fate hung trembling in the balance of indecision. A light hand rested on your shoulder, an earnest voice was pleading low with you to close with God's offer of mercy, to make your choice of Christ as your Saviour, and make heaven your home. You see it all the more clearly now: the choice you were making, the issue that was at stake. All the tremendous reality of perdition is familiar to you now. If you could put yourself back in that same place where you had the chance to choose, and where, I won't say your decision, but your indecision, turned you away from the narrow way that leads to life; if you could just sit down in that same meeting house bench, and hear those same lips, long silent now in death, pleading with you; what

answer would you make now to their appeal? With all hell driving you, wouldn't you get up quickly and go forward, crying to God for mercy on your sinful soul? Friend! I came here to make the same offer and the same appeal. God sent me, or I never could have got here. He says, 'I am the Lord; I change not.' His mercy endureth forever. He would have all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. He has no pleasure in the soul-death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his wicked way and live. He has declared His purpose that as in Adam all die, so in Christ all shall be made alive. But He cannot, will not, save you against your will. He still stretches out His arms of love and mercy to you each, and cries, 'Turn, for why will ye die!' Greater love no imagination can conceive. If God's offers of mercy had ended for you with the accident of physical death, you might have found a flaw in His love. But these offers are extended to you in the abyss of moral death. Even in the throes of perdition, you can hear His voice pleading with your soul. You are weary with the toil and turmoil of hell, and He calls to you, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' How do I know that? Why, I can begin to see it in your soul-faces. Perhaps you are none of you all bad. If you still have soul enough left to wish for better things, that shows God's Holy Spirit is dealing with you. There

is a better nature that won't let you rest in evil. All heaven is calling you away from this state. Will you not listen to heaven's call? That dear mother who nursed you and taught you to pray is calling you away from here. The wife who made a happy home for you once, who prayed for you every night, and cheered you every day — I have a special message to one man's soul somewhere out here from the dearest wife God could find to bless him with. She told me to look Albert up the first thing. Perhaps each of you has some such dear tie drawing you away toward heaven. Oh, yield to its drawing just now! You thought it was a man's part, perhaps, to hold out against the loving prayers that were often lifted to God for your salvation in your little earthly life. Haven't you been stubborn long enough to satisfy that whim? Haven't you suffered enough; haven't you inflicted loss and unsatisfied longing enough? Tell me just now that you give in to God's love. You do not need to lift a hand, for I can see into your hearts now and they are troubled. Come close, close, close! and we will pray together. It isn't too late to pray so long as you can wish to pray. Praying itself is heaven; oh! come and try to pray."

It was wonderful how clear and distinct thousands of those lost souls came out around, above, beneath, to the vision of love, as I went on talking to them. The thrill of apprehending their million-fold play of thought gave me inspiration

such as I had never experienced before. Even in the earthly ministry often the sermon had come, half of it, from the faces of the congregation: the brightening eyes, the alert attitudes, the response of varying expression gave a certain interchange of thought between speaker and hearers very helpful to the former. But here I found myself in the midst of a vast sphere of interresponsive thoughts. I could watch the play of the whole electric current, and with my finger upon its key, see its spark flit from soul to soul. I was distinctly conscious of the struggle of contending impulses in each. I began to realize, as I was making the concluding appeal, that this was to be the chief drawback, although the chief delight, in dealing with the crowd in public evangelism in hell, that no soul had its needful privacy to easily make an independent decision. Even far more than in congregations on earth, each was under the eye of the other. The glow of softened feeling in one soul was directly subjected to the chill of reluctance in other souls around. I cried to God for power to move the whole mass; for it seemed that only so could any be won. There were moments as they listened when the Holy Spirit's power would sweep over the audience, turning up the bright side of their poor dark souls to view, like the leaves of a poplar forest turned in a wind, and I would almost look to see the whole mass converted at once: then there would come a wavering as by some counter-

current, and I could hear in soul some sneer like a serpent's hiss ripping through the crowd. When I made my appeal for penitents to come near, the pull and counter-pull grew so tense, my own soul seemed ready to be drawn asunder: and when they began to drift heavily, despairingly away, I could not bear to witness the result; but blotting all else out from consciousness, as though I hid my face in my hands, I prayed to the omnipotent Redeemer at least to save one.

Something touched me softly, timidly; I could hardly have been sure of it, only the old-time thrill of the soul winner in his moment of success came with the touch, even more bewildering in its sudden joy than ever before. Some one was praying close beside me. I recognized Sadie just by that timid, appealing touch: there was still something of the innocence of the little child with golden curls and soft blue eyes with whom I had played often in my boyhood. In a moment, by one wonderful flash of self-revelation, she laid bare before me the whole pitiful history of those after years and thus much of eternity. I saw her drawn away from God by her misplaced, mistaken love for Ecchols, saw her learning doubt from him, getting the alcohol and opium habits from him, losing her better self in the toleration for his fantastic vices which developed into participation in them, not because she cared for vicious gratification, but just because she loved Hatchet and clung to him utterly, sacrificing re-

ligion, purity, heaven, all. I saw for the first time the inner-heart history of her life's crowning tragedy when her husband deserted her: saw her soul groping helplessly, piteously, like a blind puppy left by its mother. I saw those who cared for her necessities as she pined and died talking with her often of God's mercy and forgiveness, yet receiving always the same answer that she would not care to seek heaven if he was not to be there. Then she tried to show me her life in hell. Dimly and bewildered, I followed the zigzag of her wanderings in search of her lost one, down into bottomless chasms of evil, along starless canyons of doubt; ever groping wearily after, hampering, clogging, yet never quite sharing his life. And now at the end of that terrible journey about hell, here the poor little thing was sobbing out her heart's first real cry to God. "I am so lonely!" she cried over and over. "Oh! I am so lonely!"

"Are you just lonely still for Hatchet, Sadie," I asked, "or are you truly lonely for God?"

"I am lonely for a little love," she answered. "You said in your sermon, or you made us feel, that God loves us still. Do you think He can truly love an ugly little waif of hell like me?"

"It is only the smut and scars and wrinkles of sin that are ugly, Sadie," I said. "God sees beneath these the soul of my innocent playmate of long ago. If you really wish His love and forgiveness, ask Him for it, and you can know

that you have it right now. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from ALL sin. The balm of His grace will smooth away all the scars and wrinkles. It will not be hard for Jesus to make your soul young and beautiful again. Don't you remember how you and Hatchet and I used to make play games out of the stories we had read: Ali Baba and the 'open sesame' cave of the Forty Robbers, Beauty and the Beast, Rip van Winkle, and all the others? Sometimes life itself appears to me in the nature of such a little game of transformations. Just as we used to act out the various metamorphoses of the Arabian Nights and the fairy tales in our childish play, so lives are transformed under the spell of sin's witchcraft or the restoring power of God's wonderful grace. You are coming back to your natural shape even while you pray."

"But I've been under the spell so long," she moaned. "For a hundred and fifty years it doesn't seem as though I have been Sadie at all, but some other woman. There are so many wrong steps to retrace! How can I hope to find my way back from it all and reach heaven at last?"

"You have been going wrong," I replied, "ever since you put my old friend Hatchet Ecchols in the place of God. You will get right just as you put God in his right place. A thousand years are with God as one day. It isn't the length of your repentance or penance that will count.

He can undo in one moment Satan's evil work upon your soul during the whole of those long, wrong years. Yes, I know you have to reap what you have sown, but you do not have to reap it as a chain-gang convict: you may reap as an angel of light. It is all in giving yourself up right now and forever utterly to God. Will you do it? Even if He tells you to leave Hatchet in hell, will you give yourself into the care of Jesus now?"

"Do you think He will have to separate me from my husband for always?" she asked trembling.

I replied that I hoped not, and that I was sure God would not have her love Hatchet less, only differently. Idolatrous infatuation must give place to Christ-like pity. She could pray for him always. God might even use her as the surer missionary to win her husband back to Himself. The fascination which she had failed to exercise continually upon him as a compliant slave might yet be given her as God's angel of mercy to his restless soul. "All this is for us to know in God's good time," I admitted; "all we need now is just to love to let Him do as He pleases with us. It's the only way we can feel, and really pray. Will you ask Him to help you do that, poor little girl?"

"Dear Jesus," Sadie prayed for answer, "I am so tired! I am so ashamed to have You look at me. Nat says You are willing to take me just

as I am. Oh cover me up quick under the robe of Thy mercy. Wash the sin-stains off my soul with Thy precious blood. I have been ashamed in my soul for so long! I can't bear for any more people to see me looking like this. Oh! I'm so tired sinning for what I thought was love. Dear Jesus, pity my poor husband and save him. Let me help save him, if I can ever be worthy. Oh Saviour, I am so tired and lonely! Can You love me? Dear Saviour, do anything You please with me, only forgive me and love me. Dear Jesus, bless Nat for coming to save me. Help him to save a great many out of this awful place. Help him to find the one that is on his thoughts just now. Never mind about me. I'm willing to stay in hell, if only You will stay with me."

It was very wonderful: I could hear her soul talking to our Saviour and hear Him replying distinctly to her just as when waiting at a rural telephone with ear to the receiver, we have sometimes found it necessary to listen for a moment to the conversation of others. This is the inner thrill of heaven, to receive God's response to prayer quite as plain and clear in its articulation as all our conversation with each other. In the flesh-life this response, though equally real, came to us wrapped in the mystery of spiritual exaltation, and somewhat vague in its contrast with the physical media of communication; speech, gesture, facial expression, writing, printing, artistic illustration, graphophony, telephony, signaling,

telegraphy, even the wireless. We were so sense-bound; all of these tedious, indirect, physical ways of conveying thought often impressed us more definitely, if not more powerfully than the direct vibrant touch of God's over-soul, in His ready, tender, faithful response to every thought and wish of honest prayer. But in the spirit life of heaven we not only see as we are seen and know as we are known, but we hear and apprehend God's thoughts directly even as our thoughts have all our lives been heard by Him. The power of apprehending God, in which we have been growing as we grew in grace on earth, becomes the dominant fact of consciousness in the round of heaven's expanded life. This is life eternal, just to know God.

But here in hell I heard for the first time a penitent soul in the ecstasy of its first joy talking with God, and caught distinctly each reply of comforting endearment and entire reconciliation. It was only one little lost sheep nestling wistfully to the Shepherd's side: just one poor simpleton of sin; but as a demonstration of the theory of soul-winning with which I had started out for hell, Sadie's conversion was enough. Heaven itself had yielded no joy like this. "Master," I said, "if it is just this one, and then in the course of a century or so one other, I am willing to keep it up while hell lasts."

But I was already conscious of another spirit hovering near, approaching and then receding

with bound and rebound in a most confusing manner, as though desiring by turns to interview me and then to get as far as possible away from me. I said to Sadie, "I am not going to leave you, little girl. I will keep you in consciousness, so that you need only call. But there are others for whom I must seek. Joy asked me to find her husband. You heard, no doubt, that she married Albert Detwiler. Yes, I got married, too. You must know Jeanie. I only wish she were here right now. You need a sister woman to —"

"Is that you, dear Boy?" came a cheery spirit's voice. "I wondered how far you would get on your mission without calling for your girl's help. And after all the remarkable expeditions on which you have led me in days gone by, I must say that this —"

Then she became aware of Sadie. I waited wonderingly to see how she would be affected. Women are often so severe toward each other: and here was a soul shrunken, withered, haggard with its century and three-quarters of God-denying love and longing, only just beginning to change under God's touch.

But Jeanie took her up with a tender embrace. "Oh! you poor, dear child!" she cried. "Oh! you precious penitent!" And as Sadie tried to show her all the past, as she had showed it to me, Jeanie only soothed her more compassionately. Instead of shrinking from her, she drew her closer, and with tears of the soul, the two women

clung to one another rejoicing, grieving, praying, planning for the future with a volubility and versatility of which only women spirits are capable.

CHAPTER V

Feeling relieved about Sadie, I could now turn less divided attention to the unrecognized spirit which had been gyrating so strangely hither and away in our neighborhood all this time. With a strong outreach of sympathy I managed to clasp and hold him on his next near approach, and in spite of his continual perplexing change of color and shape, I began to feel that I knew him by the very mark of his unknowableness. I could never quite apprehend Albert Detwiler when we were boys and young men together. There were so many of him, I found myself continually puzzled, in my slow downrightness, to know which was the real Albert. He was so versatile, so clever, so handsome, so everything that I never could be; there were years when we were growing up together in which it never entered into my heart to believe that Joy could possibly prefer me to her fascinating boy cousin, and the only thing that aroused my resentment about him was that I never could feel that he loved her enough. I loved this girl utterly, adoringly, from sheer compelling power of destiny, asking nothing in return. There was no light joke or shallow pleasantry possible in what lay for the most part too deep for words within the heart of my heart, which was hers. I could often have been angry with Albert for his flippant, talkative way with

Joy; only he bewildered me so by his many moods that I could never get angry quick enough.

There came a summer morning, Joy was turned eighteen and I was home on my second vacation from the university: the time and place are as distinct in my memory after the second century has nearly gone by as though it were yesterday: it was at a bend in the valley road leading down to the village where we stopped for a moment, Joy and I, under the shade of a maple that grew just inside the road fence. Joy let me retie the lace of her low shoe, and when I looked up she said, "Do you know, Nat, if any one should ever win my heart, it would not be one who impressed me in other ways, but it would be the one that loved me more than all the world."

After that Albert rather faded into the background of our life, and he was not so much of a problem in my thoughts, until I heard that Joy had married him.

"Albert," I said, as I clung to his swaying, changing shape in hell, "I am very glad to have found you, and I thank you for coming to meet me. You were the first object of my search in coming here. Joy wished me to find you and to tell you that she wants you in heaven."

"Heaven?" he answered. "This is heaven. Good is all: heaven is all. There is no other place but heaven."

"Shade of Mrs. Eddy!" I exclaimed. "Where did you get hold of that?"

"I have been converted since I thought I died," Albert declared impressively.

This was news with a welcome sound. I was only mystified to understand why we hadn't seen anything of him in heaven. I didn't wish to argue with him. "Why do you stay away from Joy?" I asked. "She is lonely for you."

"I am not going back where I have once been snubbed," Albert answered. "I was near you all once, and you would not notice me. You went right on with your life. You were all very much absorbed in each other. I tried passionately, beseechingly to attract your attention. You paid no more attention to me than if I were not in the universe. Ha! ha! ha! how you stare!" he cried, and hell echoed with harsh laughter. "You act the thing out well, or else you are still under the spell of your old narrow creed. Your sermon awhile back sounded for all the world like that first summer when you were out from the seminary and tried to preach in your father's former pulpit. You and Joy were sweet on each other then. Man, haven't you learned anything yet? You come around and insult a million or more people talking about hell. Now, Nat," he continued, with one of his sudden, perplexing changes of tone, "I'd like to help you out of this gloomy delusion. I feel a benevolent interest in you. I am incapable of bearing malice even for the greatest wrongs. There isn't really any such place as hell. God wouldn't be good; I mean Good

wouldn't be good and have any hell in its world. Look around you. Hell is supposed to be a prison. Where are the walls? Can't we go where we like? How long is it going to take you to get away from your dark superstitions? Everything goes to prove the truth of the Christian Science position. What we thought was a body and its ailments is gone. Spirit is all. What you think looks like sin in us (of course you can't see any in yourself), why, it's just the lingering delusion of carnality. There are long shadows cast by the sunrise. I suppose you have come out of your thoughts of disease before this. Now come out of your thoughts of sin and of hell, and there won't be any for you any more."

Then he changed character suddenly again and added, lowering and bellowing defiantly into my soul, "And see here, you give me back my wife. She's mine: she ain't yours: she jilted you: she married me: you've got another one: ain't that enough? What do you want with two. Is that what you call heaven? Oh, you saints in paradise! Oh, you lovely, sweet, innocent creatures! Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

I was more disturbed than I could have supposed it possible for a redeemed soul, kept by the power of God, to be. I had never heard such laughter. What I had sometimes heard in passing Tippleton saloon doors on summer Saturday nights was subdued and modulated in comparison. The laughter I had been hearing in heaven

is deliciously musical like an orchestra of Swiss bells and chiming glasses, with pedal base accompaniment, tinkling, shimmering, rioting up and down the gamut far beyond the fifth and sixth octaves from middle range, replete with wondrous double meanings, exquisite odd contrasts of feeling. But this hell-laughter was sadder to hear than any wail of woe. It went through my soul with a jar, with a rumble, a screech, a groan, a cackle, a bray, a hoot, a growl, a cough, a snort, a wheeze, a crunch, a scrape, a jangle, a crash, a shriek, a howl, a curse, a squawk, a roar, a loon's cry, a catterwaul of unearthly discordant malediction that made me shiver and shrink. Startled by Albert's challenge, it occurred to me for the first time to take my bearings since coming to hell; and truly enough, the illimitable universe lay six square about me just as before. As a matter of experiment, I tried the talisman of wishing, and found myself one moment in heaven and the next in hell. A flash of glory, a burst of song, was succeeded instantly by bodeful gloom and hideous pandemonium. Only I noticed that I was not conscious of Albert's presence during the first interval; and I had to fumble and clutch for him in a dazed way on my return.

"What made you do that?" he exclaimed somewhat angrily. "Why do you try to turn your back on me while we are talking? Are you so ashamed?"

"I have been back in heaven a moment," I

answered apologetically. "The contrast makes me blink and it is hard to catch what you say."

"Nonsense!" Albert exclaimed. "It was only a minute; I had you in view all the time; and the same star was at the zenith the whole while."

"Nevertheless," I replied more calmly, "I was in another world infinitely distant from this and into which you in your unrepentant state can never possibly enter. Like Dives in his torment, you seem to be permitted some marvelous power to see us now and then; but you really can have no just apperception of heaven, or you could not possibly be content to mope in hell without crying to God, if possibly He may forgive you and open up a way of escape."

Albert laughed more mirthlessly than before. "Do you think," he asked, "that I'd enjoy being around in your heaven to play second fiddle to you with my own wife? No; that would be hell, for sure."

I could have been righteously provoked with Albert, if I had not pitied him so intensely. I labored to explain to him what were the relations of the sexes in heaven: that we neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God: that the sex of spirits is largely a matter of inherent or acquired disposition, some who had been tabernacled in women's bodies finding themselves men in soul in the glorified state, or *vice versa*, and that with no disparagement to either sex: how some married couples find themselves of

the same sex in heaven, just good chums or twin sisters, and very much relieved by the change. "After all has been said and sung," I insisted, "the fondest wife on earth was only a dearer kind of friend. She was just 'my sister, my spouse.' In heaven all our friendships are more intimate, more confidential than the closest tie of earth."

"A sort of universal free love, I reckon," sneered Albert.

"Just as free and as frank as the pure, innocent love of brothers and sisters," I answered. "Redeemed spirits are drawn to one another in the glow of immortal youth. They take on at will forms of exquisite grace and loveliness, of strength and dignity. Each higher thought, emotion, impulse, adds shape and color to a perfection that is ever unfolding. The life of heaven is a never-failing idyl. The complex elements, the infinite variety, the free spirit of its cosmopolitan make-up lead to unending romance of a platonic sort; but there can be no bitterness of jealousy where every soul is yielded to God's will, and where soul meets soul in the naked innocence which sees as we are seen and knows as we are known."

Albert listened quietly now; but his soul darkened as he answered, "Nat, you always were in for a general soft time; but I tell you I want Alice all to myself."

"See here, Albert," I said, "you are forgetting that your marriage vows were only for the

mortal life. You have no claim on Joy now; except as you can demonstrate a superior affinity to that of others. She has told us of late how often in your wedded life she implored you to make your peace with God and share with her the dearest hopes of heaven. You were profoundly respectful, off and on, toward her religion in your manner; but in the real bent of your life you treated it with contempt. You deliberately took your chances on being separated from your wife in eternity; you were cowed by the possible sneers of the other men; you went after the trifling satisfaction of earth's hollow popularity. You thought it was effeminate to have any definite views on the subject of God and eternity. You dallied with all the issues that were really worth settling. Now you find that between you and her there is a gulf fixed. You might go right through her and you couldn't attract her attention. She is sorry for you, she wishes for you; but she is entirely unconscious of you, for you are not of her world. But her world is open to you, old fellow, if you will just get down to reality and hold yourself one thing long enough to tell God you are sorry for being such a fool. Come now, you must listen to the truth spoken in love," I cried, darting after him as he almost slipped away from me into hell's abyss. "I have no desire to keep your wife from you. Be a man. Get right with God. Win heaven. Win the inner heaven of Joy's love. Be her husband in

soul. You will find her as uninvolved in her stainless, flawless loyalty as on the day you led her to the altar. I have simply loved her a little longer and more dearly in heaven than I had already loved her, day by day, on earth. There is no regret in either of our hearts for the past. Jeanie made me a better wife, in God's providence, than ever Joy could have made. She managed me more deftly, and got more out of me for God. She understands me better to-day. There was nothing in our love's young dream, Joy's and mine, to spoil your married life with her. Most of the time I did not even know where you were living; but if it had been next door, you would have been given no reason to feel uncomfortable in the steady, matter-of-fact relations of kindness which might have existed between us. Only in our inner souls we would each have known and agreed that God meant us to love each other always. Many a day I had not one thought of her; and yet I would dream of her that night, and tell the dream to Jeanie the next morning. Jeanie only loved me more for that."

"So you've practically got two sweethearts in what you call heaven," Albert persisted.

"It may seem so to your monopolistic vision," I answered; "but really I believe the one whom I call sweetheart most often is my great great granddaughter, Content, a sixteen-year-old lately come from earth. I do think sometimes she is about the sweetest creature God has yet

made. Earth was not fitted to grow such girls in our own competitive period."

Albert laughed again. "Milton tells us about the fool's paradise," he said, "and I guess that's where you've got to."

"If it is foolish to be glad forever," I answered. "Oh, Albert, I wish I could make you see how sensible heaven is. I only wish I had your son, Albert, here. Alice says you were always the same in your manner toward him. He could tell you if we are not acting sensibly and doing right."

Of course the thing I might have expected in God's great mercy happened then. Albert came, and the meeting between father and son after nearly a century of separation showed me depths of reality in the senior Albert's nature that made my heart bound with hope. Albert did not argue with his father as I had been inclined to do; but just showed him his heart's desire to have him in heaven. He seemed almost ready to give up to God; yet it was hard for him to acknowledge his need of the Saviour of sinners. "I am a Christian," he insisted. "I am a member of the Church of Christ, Scientist."

He insisted on taking us to one of their meetings. It occurred within the central glories of the Milky Way, and was attended by some hundreds of millions of lost souls; for Christian Science has proven to be a well adapted and popular cult in hell. We found the audience listening to

the address of an almost incredibly weazened, decrepit, not unvenerable looking feminine spirit. "It is She, herself," whispered our guide.

As on earth, we found the leader of the cult a woman. A marvelous power of diction was being wielded by this frail-appearing creature, who seemed ready to vanish with sheer weariness. "There is no death," she was saying; "so much of our theory has been proven in the experience of each of us. Some of us used to dread death. Preachers used to frighten us with funeral sermons preached in advance. Literature was full of the dirge and wail of dying. But when this 'King of Terrors' came to you and me, he brought only disillusion from the spell of matter. We laughed to find that we were not dead, but alive, immortal, inextinguishable for ever more. Not God, Good, Himself, Itself, could, would take from us the inalienable, inherent, essential nature of living forever. The last hampering fear dropped like a shattered fetter from our soul. There is no fear. What have we to cower before, and shrink from, and cringe under now? The worst has happened and has proved to be only a bug-a-boo. Other bug-a-boos with which preachers of the gospel, so called, used to try and fright us have failed to materialize in the allness of Good. Where is their lake of fire and brimstone? It could not harm our spirits if we found it. We pass through the sun's photosphere unsinged: we linger in ice caves of dead

planets unchilled. All these apparently material things are only a vain show. Mind alone is real. As a man thinketh, so is he. Evil be to him who evil thinks. There is no sin, except as a man thinks that he sins. The cure of sinning is to stop thinking that there is reality in sin. There is no atonement needed, except for men to think thoughts that are at one with Infinite Mind. There is no punishment, temporary or eternal; except in the distorted dread of a punishment that never comes. Good is all, and Good cannot punish Itself.

“Where is the weeping and gnashing of teeth?” she concluded with a flourish. “We spirits have no tears to weep, and no teeth to gnash. Where is the bottomless pit? Have we seen any smoke of its torment darkening the sun and the air? Could we be held in by its chain, its key, or its seal? Where is that outer darkness? We spirits can see without light. Where is the place prepared for the Devil and his angels? There is no real devil, and he has no angels. We look outward into all these glories which blaze and whirl around us. We look to the zenith, and we look to the nadir. We sweep with all but limitless vision the horizon of the nearer and better known infinity. We peer and delve into the exhaustless world of mystery contained in a single molecule. And when we have sought and experimented and analyzed and dissected and reconnoitered for a century in vain, we still call to the

echoes of the universe and receive back our question in answer, 'Where is hell? Where is hell? Where is hell?' "

The applause and the laughter which greeted this peroration seemed to rattle among the very rafters of hell; yet I was conscious that not even the faintest pulsation of it was heard in heaven. We stayed to the "demonstration meeting" which though smaller in its attendance was even more curious than the preaching service. We could see that our partial convert to Christ was getting back under the spell of this type of hell's "healthy optimism," and we watched and waited for some means of weaning him from its infatuation. The testimonies in this demonstration meeting were all along the line of the relief from gloom and despondency occasioned by embracing the principles of Christian Science either in the mortal or the spirit life, and of wonderful mental cures wrought by promulgating its evangel. One spoke of the overwhelming despair with which the new consciousness had come to him after passing through the heavy curtains of death. "The somber preaching I had heard from infancy dominated all my thoughts," he said, "and I could only moan and wail, 'This is hell!' I imagined myself lost forever, and could think of nothing but the sins of my life on earth, as I had been taught to regard them. The awful loneliness of spending eternity cast out from the presence of God, whose great salvation

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I had neglected, hung like a black pall over the sky of my future. I would have cried to God for mercy and forgiveness, only I had always been taught to believe there could be no possibility of prayer or penitence in perdition. I am sure I had what the theologians would call a conviction of sin deeper than I had known in a lifetime on earth. It was so awful to be separated from all the good, kind people I had loved all my life. Contingencies that had seemed vague before became terribly real. I felt that I must pray the prayer of the publican, or lose my reason. Even if it could never be of any use now, I thought I would at least like to tell God I was sorry. I wondered if God could hear me in hell.

“ ‘ So lonely ’twas that God Himself
Scarce seeméd there to be.’

“ And then I would remember that God is everywhere. He is our Father who art in heaven, and on earth, and in hell. He upholds all things by the word of His power. And Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. God is the same always, and the same everywhere, and His mercy endureth forever.

“ But while I was in that morbid state of mind and musing over these conceptions of an effete orthodoxy, until I was just trembling upon the verge of an old-fashioned conversion; there came to me the spirit of a certain Christian Science reader and healer, at whom I had often laughed

on earth. He said to me, 'Hail, acquaintance of former days, believe on Christ, Truth, and thou shalt be saved.' I cast about in my mind to know what such a salutation in hell, where I believed myself to be, might mean. And musing over the strange juxtaposition of concrete and abstract, personal and impersonal, in his exhortation, I exclaimed at last, 'Well, which?'

" 'And ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free,' was his reply.

" Seeing that it was considered proper and in good form to quote Scripture in hell, I replied in the language of Pilate, 'And what is truth?'

" 'The Good is the True,' replied my visitor. 'All else is but the shadow of a dream.' And so he unfolded to me the Divine Truth of Christian Science, as I had never understood it before; that there was really nothing wrong with me but wrong thoughts of myself and of God, Good. I must learn not to think sin, and remorse, and evil companionship, for these were not real, and nothing was real but Good. So I have found relief," this one concluded, "from what truly seemed like the second death I had heard preached and sung about; and while I keep close within the sphere of Christian Science influence, I am no longer so much troubled by the associations and thoughts which at first filled my soul with horror and dread."

Similar testimonies to relief from troubled consciences were given in in great numbers.

Sometimes hundreds thus "demonstrated" at once during this after-meeting, each making a distinct impression upon the listener's mind. There were also the boasts of "healers," one of whom had even persuaded one who thought himself a demon of hell that he was in reality an angel of light. Another had found a suicide raving in a delirium in which he imagined himself possessed of a body which he was continually mangling, strangling, poisoning, suffocating, dragging its corpse through space, until it came feebly to life with many a pang, only to lay violent hands upon itself again. "I fixed my attention upon this troubled soul," the healer said, "and I reflected, 'You never had a body any more than you really have now. You never committed suicide except in your thoughts. You need nothing now but to be relieved of these thoughts.' So I looked at him and he looked at me, and there was a great calm."

Perhaps the most remarkable "demonstration" was that given by one who claimed to be the spirit of Judas. "I am astonished," he said, "to think of the centuries of gnawing remorse I suffered until one came to make it plain to me that the Christ, of whose death I had supposed myself to be guilty by basest treason, never really died at all, having no real mortal body to suffer and die in, because there is no reality in suffering or death. She assures me that Christ, Truth, simply retired to the privacy of Joseph's tomb and

there worked out the principles of Christian Science. My mind has thus been greatly relieved, and I am coming to look upon myself as the greatest benefactor of all the human and extra-human race."

Young Albert and I were beginning to feel that we must take a hand in the demonstration meeting if we could hope to hold his father's mind to even a beginning of better thoughts. We could not fail to be conscious of many curious glances cast upon us. How could these people help but feel that we were not of their world? So there came into both our hearts a mighty prayer, indited by the Holy Spirit, that God would just now in great mercy show these poor sham-craving, sham-crazed souls a glimpse of His real heaven to demonstrate hell's blackness by contrast. When Judas testified, Albert junior could contain himself no longer. "Look on us!" he cried, in the language of Peter and John to the lame man at the temple gate called Beautiful. "Look on us. We came from heaven to tell you that there is something better for you than making believe you are not in hell. We are asking our God to show you one real glimpse of heaven. Oh look! look!" And as he spake, the wondrous vision came in answer to believing prayer. Perhaps they could not all see it alike, or any of them quite so clearly as we could. But there amid those same stellar glories, around us, among us, yet morally so far away, was heaven revealed,

all unconscious of our gaze, like a wondrous living, moving picture. I could distinguish acquaintances. There was Joy herself playing with our twins, Jeanie's and mine; and Jeanie came bringing the blood washed, renewed, glorified Sadie. Albert and his father saw them too, and the elder Albert exclaimed, "It is my own wife, and that is little Sadie Wells. If she can be saved, why cannot I?"

We heard heaven's joy-song of welcome to the repentant one. The strain came so faintly to our ravished ears, that hell's assembly perforce grew very still to listen to it. Some were melted down in instant penitence; all seemed awed and wonder stricken by what they saw and heard during those precious moments. For there in the midst of heaven's jubilation, the center of its adoring, grateful love, stood revealed to the soul's view our own thorn-crowned, sword-pierced, world redeeming Saviour, as it were a lamb that had been slain, His heart still bleeding for the sorrows and sins He came to take away — just our own crucified Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, the lamb slain from the foundation of the world to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of all the worlds and all the ages: He stood stretching out scarred hands that were labor-hardened, and sun-burned, yet shaped for tender touch; and those hands seemed to reach everywhere, even down into hell, and those deep spirit-eyes looked into each soul's

eyes that looked to Him, revealing God's love and the utterness of each one's need of Him.

Lit up by the reflection of this vision, hell's dinginess and barren pretence at its best came out clear to the understanding. Sin and shame stood revealed in their naked ugliness, shrinking, cowering, shivering, unable to dissemble or to hide. And back of it all, brought out into view as if by the concentrated searchlight power of a million suns focused together, there leered a wry unwilling face large as the sky of hell; a brow of thought just beneath omniscience, a chin of power only short of God's; eyes that burned like fevered seas of unrest over unsounded depths of treachery, hatred, and despair; lips that curled in mockery's thin mask of anguish, sad for their very cruelty. Face to face thus we saw them with infinity between, the world's Tempter and its Redeemer, the Adversary; source of all evil, the Advocate, author of its greater good. For some precious moments the contrast of sin and salvation was felt in hell, I believe, by some millions of souls, and then the vision faded, leaving conviction to make its unforced choice between the two.

CHAPTER VI

We found ourselves surrounded by some scores of penitents, while a few hundred others, of whom Albert's father was one, declared willingly that they were done with Christian Science. These concentric circles were formed about us without any urging upon our part, almost, as it were, automatically, each individual in them governed by the polarity of his new impulse. Out and beyond were millions interested, for the thrill of what had happened was felt far out in hell; and while some who had seen something of the vision fled away, other millions more amenable in mood flocked around. We endeavored to exhort these half-persuaded ones and onlookers to yield to the same mighty influence of God's Spirit; but some seemed merely dazed by what they had seen, others were curious and critical, others contended that this spell had been wrought by black art and power of enchantment. Some admitted that they had been impressed, but wished to understand better what it all might mean, or preferred to delay their decision for Christ. They wished to reason calmly and deliberately over this unexpected event, they deprecated all excitement in religion, and were opposed to sensational and spectacular methods of appeal. Some declared their doubt if any lasting good would result from the wave of emotion which had brought this group of seekers

about us crying, "What shall we do to be saved?" There would inevitably come a reaction from such overstrained feeling, and the final result would be detrimental to the best interests of morality and of religion. Others were expressing their positive opposition to this interruption of an accredited religious assemblage, and were beginning to threaten that we ought to be summarily dealt with, while back of them all lowered, indistinct but terrible, the great face of the potentate of hell, who would willingly brook no intrusion of his rightful domain.

Our hands were very full for a time, between speaking words of cheer and hope to broken and contrite hearts bowed around us, filled with a revulsion to loathing for the falseness of their past and of that world in which they had been moving, and at the same time trying to meet so many objectors, and to bring so many hesitating ones to a decision. I was more than ever grateful for young Albert's comradeship as I beheld him in calm, strong persuasiveness bidding our converts put their whole trust in the merciful God and Saviour who had revealed Himself to them in answer to our simple prayer. In those moments he and I grew in soul as never before, while we gave our attention to the individual needs and difficulties of each stirred spirit around us. My heart was swelling with rapture and longing, as I cried to God for others and others still, that this moment of supreme opportunity might not

pass by unavailingly for one of them, leaving that soul hardened in its power of resistance to God. I remember particularly pleading with the soul who had first testified in the demonstration meeting of the Scientists as one who had been near to repentance when he first came to find himself in hell. But he replied that he had experienced these emotions of conviction so painfully at that time, he shrank now from renewing the impressions which cost him so much mental discomfort then. Christian Science had brought him partial relief, and it would be ungrateful in him not to remain true to that faith.

There seemed nothing left but to endeavor to seek out the lady of the cult. If she could be converted to the Savior of sinners herself, the whole bubble might collapse in hell, as it had on earth after its originator's decease. I had considerable difficulty in finding her. I had noticed after her wonderful speech in the Scientist meeting, that instead of seeming elated by its splendid success, she appeared fairly to shrink with overpowering weariness. All through the demonstration meeting she had lingered in view drawn within herself; but at the time of the vision she shrivelled up almost to the vanishing point. Thus I found her by searching in deepest concern and pity, and getting her under the focus of a strong lens of discriminating appreciation. "I feel so sorry for you," I said as soon as she was

clearly discerned. "This thing is wearing you out. Here you are dying by inches through the centuries; will you not come to Christ that you may have life?"

Perhaps she was really too much exhausted by all that she had just gone through to attempt to act her part with me, perhaps she yielded by so much to the influence of the Holy Spirit; at any rate she took me into her confidence, as perhaps she had not been confidential with any one outside her hierarchy since the beginning of her fame in hell. "I am tired and ill," she admitted; "but my success astonishes and fascinates me still. I cannot understand it yet. As long as we were honest in talking Quinbyism, and giving him the credit for his philosophy of health, we could hardly get any one to listen to us long at a time. But when we invented the name of Christian Science for it, and gave out that we had it by revelation, almost immediately we began to have thousands at our feet. Our doctrine was such a stupendous success on earth, that it was hard for me sometimes to keep from believing it myself. But it has been a millionfold greater success here, and it has lasted longer, and seems likely to live. I am in it for all it will yield me. I will see the play through — at least as long as I have the star part. If this *is* hell, it is a vast bonanza mine for me. 'Better to rule in hell, than serve in heaven' is the sentiment that suits

my case exactly. I think really you had better go on and talk to some one who isn't making a good thing of it here."

I could not change her from this decision. "Put yourself in my place," she replied to my expostulation. "Who are you in heaven? Is your name echoed from world to world? Are you confronted and charmed by an idealized, exalted image of yourself in the minds of your fellows whichever way you turn? Can you turn every commonplace thought you express into treasure, and do your fellows vie with each other in enriching you for fancied amelioration of endlessly chronic sufferings? How large a personage would I be in your world? The humblest penitent, saved from degraded crimes, would have more to say for himself than I could have to say for myself. Yes, the strain of this unreality is something frightful; but that is part of the penalty, I suppose, of being eminent."

So my urging proved unavailing. With one or two exceptions, those influenced to decide for heaven just then were won directly and solely by the power of the vision of heaven. "You are God's converts rather than ours," Albert assured them, "and we can safely commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. God will talk to you whenever you talk to Him, just as He is talking to us now. He is able to sanctify you

wholly from this moment, if you will but give your whole attention to what He says to you. You may reach heaven at one bound, or you may climb slowly heavenward, often slipping back, just according as you yield yourselves wholly or partially to God, trusting wholly in the only Saviour, or partly in your own endeavors to make up for the past. The cut-throat who hung upon his cross close beside our Jesus only had to offer one prayer, and he has been in paradise from that day."

"It is true!" cried one of our penitents. "I am that other plunderer that hung and railed on the Nazarene from my cross at His other side. Often have I looked for my confederate in this spirit world. But I saw him just now in that vision. I knew him by his hearty, straight-out way. There was never a lad just like him. And there he was close by the same One we were crucified with. Only he had grown like Him, for he had been so long seeing Him as He is. And I would be with them too! Who would think that one little wish expressed to Jesus Christ would make all this difference between us two for twenty centuries and a half!"

The greater number of our converts had been moved in this same way by recognizing people they had known in our vision of heaven. People who had been separated by sudden death from those they loved now saw them as suddenly again. I was reminded of the story of a wayward girl

converted from a life of shame and heart-break by finding her mother's photograph hung upon the wall of a mission. Here were wayward sons and daughters in hell just granted a glimpse of a mother, a father in heaven still longing for their presence there. The mystery was that every spectator from hell had not been instantly converted. Of course we pleaded most earnestly with Albert's father, who had been our guide to this concourse, and who lingered near among the undecided ones. "I suppose you will organize your converts into a church," he suggested. "I will join as an associate member, and accept office as a trustee or vestryman or something. You shall have my subscription, and I will give you standing among us by my name and influence."

"God forbid!" young Albert and I exclaimed at once. "Why father," Albert said, "that would be almost giving up our last hope of ever seeing you soundly converted to God. While you were patronizing Christ, and listening with a condescending smirk to the most strenuous applications of gospel truth, growing as familiar as an undertaker with solemn appeals which you are constantly gaining practice in resisting; how would the arrow of honest conviction ever have a chance to reach your heart? Oh father!" he cried. "Do not postpone your decision, or try to compromise matters with God. It is now, now that you must be saved or damned. When will God ever give you a stronger demonstration

or inducement than you have experienced just now? Can you not see that this has been and will be the hell of your hell — eternally trifling with the eternal God, who will not be trifled with?"

The elder Albert showed signs of rising anger. "It is true," I said, as his spirit turned to me: "you can be a trustee or a vestryman, and still be damned. I am rather looking for a dozen or more of my former trustees who haven't as yet, to my knowledge, arrived in heaven, in hope and fear that I may find them occupying some distinguished positions here and there in hell. I like your suggestion about organizing a church. It would seem a pity to leave all these young believers straggling about undeveloped and unorganized for mutual help. But there is one thing you can calmly rest assured we won't do. If we cannot found a church strong enough to stand alone with God, we won't set one up and prop it from the outside to be very kindly owned, controlled, and popularized by men without faith, strong only in policies of compromise with evil. You have either got to come in, or keep your hands off. You say you are done with Christian Science. Then what is there for you but a full surrender to Christ? We will gladly have you in our little church of blood-washed sinners; but you will have to come through Christ, the Door. He says, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by

me!’ Come to Christ now, or else you remain in the outer darkness, out of heaven, out of your wife’s fond embrace, out of the ark of safety, out of everything good, out of everything glad; forever more WITHOUT.”

“You need not be scornful,” Albert senior protested. “There are plenty of other churches I can join besides yours.”

“Yes, hell-churches,” I admitted. “Synagogues of Satan: Mormons, perhaps, or Spiritualists, possibly some Hicksite Quakers.”

“That is a very small portion of the list,” he answered proudly. “Besides these I know of some Roman Catholic churches, some Greek Catholic, some Anglican Catholic or Episcopalian, beside Universalist, Unitarian, Zionite, Millennial Dawn, Methodist North, Methodist South, Campbellite Baptist, Free Baptist, Close Communion Baptist both Hard Shell and New School, Lutherans, Congregationalists, Reformed Dutch, and hundreds more. If this is hell, then hell is the paradise of denominations.”

“I did not hear you include Presbyterians in your list,” I suggested somewhat timidly and wholly aghast at such a revelation. “Can it be that among so many excellent societies ours of foremost standing and influence is not represented?”

“Presbyterians?” asked Albert. “Why yes, there’s a man named Rorer —”

“Oh my prophetic soul!” I exclaimed. “Has

Rorer gotten to be an elder again in hell?"

"Did you know him?" Albert asked. "Why certainly. He is senior elder and clerk of session in one of the swell Presbyterian churches of these parts. I'll take you around there some time."

I promised to go with him, but I appealed to him again that we had something more pressing to which we should attend. "I cannot understand about these hell-churches until I can make a study of them!" I said; "but after all you have experienced since we met here, do you, can you really think for a moment that you could be satisfied in any one of all these organizations away from God and from Joy and heaven?"

"No I cannot," he said with a ring of frankness in his thought that made my soul glad. "I know that. But when it comes to analyzing my feelings and confessing that I am converted to your gospel, I am hardly prepared to do that. You must give a fellow a little more time. It seems so strange to be really getting in earnest about something. I have lived a multiple, semi-plausible, many-masked sort of life for so long, that I hardly know what to make of myself now that I seem to be getting down to one positive conviction. I have been such a hypocrite, how can I ever trust myself as real? I wonder how these people will hold out in their sudden penitence. I have known some of them for smirk and tonguey Christian Scientists — not the innocent, lovable sort we sometimes met on earth at

all. I wonder how sincere they are in their new profession. These conversions off-hand, they frighten me. I rub my eyes metaphorically to be sure of the transformation I witness here. And I can't help asking, Is it actual? Will it last?"

"Try it yourself, Albert," I suggested, "and then you will know if this change is real. The strong element in favor of spirit-world evangelism is that we have only to be real ourselves and nothing false can join itself to us. If there were one attempting hypocrisy in this praying group, his own hollowness would float him out of the circle. Struggle as he might, he would find himself blown farther away than an open adversary. All that holds you near is your sympathy with us, and further in than your appreciation penetrates there is a sacred confidential privacy of souls talking with God which I can tell you about, but I cannot unveil it to your sight until you yield to God's Spirit yourself in penitential prayer. Whatever is to be for each of these seeking souls the pathway of its approach to the higher glory of heaven; you can rest quietly assured that each is already truly within the strait gate and learning to walk the narrow way that leads, as sure as God is true, on to eternal life. You do not need to be solicitous about these others. The question of tremendous solicitude is for yourself, and it is all just between you and your offended God, your reconciling Saviour;

even as though there were no other sentient beings inhabiting this boundless universe but just you and Him. What are you going to do with the Christ? Decide now, and now forever."

Albert's soul was bowed low. He said, "I cannot feel that there is anything to me to make a decision. I cannot look back on all my flimsy existence and be sure that I ever felt anything really, ever thought or believed anything, ever actually decided anything, except as the drift took me. I have never really been anything, and I am nothing now. How can nothing decide?"

Then young Albert drew him into a strong embrace. "Father," he said, "if you know that you are nothing; then you are very near to knowing Christ as your all in all. Won't you take Him right now to be your all?"

He said, "Yes, I will."

I doubt if all hell contained a happier prayer circle than ours after that. More than one of the undecided ones around us was drawn in by the sheer compulsion of the pull of our joy. Yes, we would organize a little church, we all agreed, and we would call it the Brotherhood of the Heavenly Vision. But we felt that we ought to come into touch in some way with the general body of the redeemed in hell, if we could find them. I wished for Peale, but in his stead came a lady whose debonair presence told me before she spoke that this was Doctor Eleanor Chestnut. She rejoiced with us, and declared that she had

not seen anything exactly like it in all her century and a half in hell. "I do not recall, before, coming across a Christian Scientist brought back to the faith in the Saviour of sinners," she said. "Our work among the souls of heathen seems easy beside this." She was puzzled to know just who would come nearest to us in the various departments of infernal missions. "There's Jerry McCauley's rescue work," she reflected; "but that is almost as far from this as ours. Sam Jones is slinging some hard shot around among church members of former days. Hell is so wide, it is hard to think of all the lieutenants of salvation one has met here. Dear old Charles Spurgeon still holds forth the Word of Life to splendid audiences, and Gipsy Smith would simply have been lost for an object to live for, if he had not recently taken to touring in hell for souls to save. Torrey and Biederwolf, Moody and Finney, Wesley, Whitfield, Hugh Price Hughes and Saint Patrick are all hard at it; while Edwards frequently remarks, 'I told you so,' to sinners in the hands of an angry God. All these grand men, and many of my own sex like Jenny Smith and Mrs. Ballington Booth, Pundita Ramabai, and Frances Willard are stirring, each along his or her chosen line in our lost spirit world. Harriet Beecher Stowe yearns over more slaves than America ever knew, and Chinese Gordon looks for lonely outposts amid Satan's hordes, to hold them for God. Then there are leaders

from the long ago keeping their youth fresh in the work of redemption. Paul and Barnabas are here to turn hell upside down yet, by God's great help. Jonah preaches to a greater Nineveh, and Jeremiah weeps over ruins sadder than Jerusalem. Andrew and Philip are still doing personal work, ably seconded by Henry Clay Trumbull. In what you are beginning to do you are in relation to the work of all these men and women, to some more closely than to others. I think if we could only take it all in at a glance, the work of many thousands for Christ in hell, as we come upon it here and there, we would not feel troubled about the future. Our Master is surely with us seeking His 'other sheep.' Surely He will seek for each UNTIL He finds it. Perhaps if we will ask Him, all softly in our hearts, He will let us see more widely how He and His helpers are faring in their long endeavor."

Even as Doctor Eleanor was still speaking the answer came. Through the murk of hell's gloom and dreariness, soft incandescent lights shone out almost at once tracing the vast circuit of heaven's influence. One of these centers of light disclosed a group of former skeptics talking with Doubting Thomas, while in their midst stood the glowing shape of One with pierced hands and wounded side. In another circle of light Mary Magdalene was bending over the spirit of a fallen woman, and He whose feet she had once bathed with tears was with them there.

We could distinguish many a faithful preacher of the gospel, who had found comparatively little to occupy him in heaven, addressing audiences, large or small, in the vast itinerary of perdition; and there were class-meetings, prayer-meetings, Bible schools, and many forms of soul-winning endeavor, each bearing some fruit for God; although, for the most part, those who had scorned and slighted these means of grace and channels of mercy in the mortal life were still scorning and slighting them in eternity. Only in the vast heathen provinces of hell we could see that the gospel message, told for the first time to some, was bringing great joy to many an error darkened soul. There was neither dimness nor distance of miles in the wondrous vista opened to our gaze; for we saw each redeemed group beckoning to us as we, too, stood revealed in the glow of the Holy Spirit's light. How gladly we signaled back to them and sent our wireless messages of cheer and comradeship in answer to theirs through all the dim spaces of this nether universe! "Oh, if my dear father could be here and see all this!" I exclaimed. "I think we would never need to argue about æonian redemption again."

The wish was only the premonition of its own fulfilment, showing that Father had been already on his way to us. I was glad that his first impression of hell should be of its only bright side. "How sad! How glorious!" was his first ex-

clamation. "Why this is near the sweetest place in all the universe!" he cried again.

"You see, Father, the doctrine does work," I reminded him: "the gospel of Christ works even in hell."

"It is the power of God unto salvation," he answered reverently. "I can understand more clearly now how it must be so. Wherever Christ is lifted up He will draw all unto Him. Sooner or later! Sooner or later! Keep steadily on, boys: I am with you now. Not at all did I realize it until now; but this must be what I have unconsciously sighed for these hundred and sixty years in heaven, in which I have labored to deem myself supremely happy, yes, and for the thirteen years before, even since I resigned my home-mission work."

Then he felt the touch of the elder Albert. "Detwiler!" he cried. "You saved too!"

"Yes, thank God! Father Prester," Albert answered, "saved at last, even so as by fire."

"My boy," Father said to him, "now I perceive and know and understand with all my mind, as well as heart, that God does truly, always and everywhere eventually answer prayer. Not that I can truly claim to have been praying for you of late. I could not deem that it would be right to do so, after I saw you pass unrepentant and unrenewed over the border line of death. But it was further back, in the old days, that I prayed

for you, back in the Valley of Summer, as Nathaniel here has named it; when you were not infrequently present in body in my congregation; yet I could never assure my heart quite positively that I was favored truly with the attention of your soul. I used often to pray that God would awaken you and send you one earnest thought before it should be eternally too late."

"Thank you for your prayer, dear Pastor," Albert replied humbly. "It is answered at last. I have had my first earnest thought, For the first time in my existence, I feel that I really have a soul."

"That seems passing strange," Father reflected, "when you have been such a long time out of the body."

"In the body, out of the body," Albert declared, "I never seemed quite real to myself before this. I am just beginning to live. Oh! I'm glad it wasn't yet too late!"

"Would it, could it ever have been 'too late,' " asked Albert the son. "While God lives, can it ever be too late for a soul He made to repent, and come back, and begin to live in Him?"

"I cannot tell," Father replied. "I am here in hell as a learner, and strangely dazed with all this that I see. Only from my inmost self something responds again and again to a mighty psalm of unfolding redemption I seem to hear, where I supposed only groans and curses would be known. Can you not catch it coming from all

these haloed groups? Listen! it is the soft beginning of a crescendo. It has an antiphonal refrain and my soul joins in the refrain — 'His mercy endureth forever.' "

I have often wondered in heaven over the fineness of ear of Father's soul. He could never distinguish one note from another in all his mortal life. He could with some mental uncertainty differentiate "Yankee Doodle," rendered instrumentally, from "Old Hundred" by a dissimilarity in the time. He would often hum dear hymns to himself in a pathetic monotone. None who knew him doubted that the New Song was sung in his soul; yet we were astonished to find him a choir leader in heaven, a master of soul harmonies, a composer whose spontaneous melodies other spirits were glad to echo. With him we listened now, and sang in turn. Hell's discords were mercifully held from our ears, as we sang. We could distinguish the calibre of each soul's feeling. No two believing souls in all hell seemed to have mellowed into harmony under exactly the same experience, yet all were at pitch and in touch in expressing the vibrant ecstasy of salvation from sin and sorrow; each telling its story, whether in jubilant tenor, in warbling treble, in pathos of contralto, or in deep tones of soulful gratitude for great deliverance; the whole harmonizing into the one dear story saved ones tell on earth, in heaven, in hell. Again and again, mingling in with the multiple thread of this

wondrous narrative, came the refrain in unison, "O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good: because His mercy endureth forever." This psalm of latest history began faintly, tremulously, as though almost choked with the diffidence of hell's contrition; but it grew stronger, drawing in voice after voice, swelling with glorious confidence in Christ's power to save unto the uttermost, until hell seemed almost ready to echo with its world-wide sob of joy. Then the lights began to fade, and with tender farewells signalled from star to star, these separate groups were left each with its task for God.

"Yes, His mercy endureth forever," Albert, our trophy of grace, confessed to us then; "but I know in my soul that I have had a narrow escape. If I had not been brought to take a stand for God this time, after all your warnings and entreaties, and after what I saw with my own mind, I believe there would have been nothing else before me but the hell of my own eternal indecision."

CHAPTER VII

Father was now as eager as a boy with a new aëroplane. "This is something all but too wonderful to believe!" he would exclaim over and over. "I, too, must go and win souls." This seemed to be the common impulse of all our converts at once. I spoke to Albert about meeting Joy, and he said, "I never so longed for Alice before; but I am determined not to see her until I have accomplished something earnest."

Father's first thought, of course, was for Harry. When I told him what Albert had said about the various denominations in hell, he became possessed with the idea that we would find Harry in the membership of one of these. "My boy was never drawn to evil company as such," he contended, "and he would most surely gravitate upward to the best company hell could furnish. There was never anything so morally wrong about Harry. He but lacked the one thing. He seemed incapable of developing an interest in sermons or in churches. Surely, ere this, he has discovered his mistake. And if he should happen upon a church in hell, his first and most natural thought would be to join it as a matter of experiment, to determine if that might not work out in the direction of a reunion with us all. Harry was always so bent upon experiments and devices. I have even sometimes thought upon earth, that if

Harry could have invented and constructed a church of wheels and cogs and motors, with a statue-like graphophone in the pulpit; he might indeed have been enabled to become interested in religion. He seemed always so entirely absorbed, as it were, in the mechanical, the external, and so entirely obtuse, not averse, to the spiritual — poor Harry!”

“Perhaps if he hasn’t joined a native church,” Albert suggested, “we may find him connected with one of the lodges. There wouldn’t be much difference for an uplift.”

“Oh! have you lodges too in hell?” I cried with new interest.

“Every device to make the ghastly reality of things seem different from what it is” Albert replied. “The things that worked on earth to keep men away from God are worked for all they are worth in hell.”

“I suppose you refer for the most part, to such minor orders as the ‘Red Men,’ the ‘Elks’ and the ‘Eagles,’” suggested Albert junior.

Albert senior drew us three close together, and spoke confidentially, almost furtively. “I regret to say,” he acknowledged, with evident trepidation, “that we have also some lodges and conclaves of Free Masons. I have been a member, myself, off and on. They aspire to run the whole shooting match. If you get them down on you, hell will be made hot for you, sure enough.”

It was impossible not to feel some of the in-

fection of his anxiety. Very cautiously I put the question. "Do you happen to know the name of any of these lodges of Free Masons?"

"Yes," he said; "I have been a sort of man about town in hell for a century. I know some of their lodges, and I suspect the existence of a great many more whose very name is kept secret even in hell. And what I can't tell you, there's a man named Wilkinson —"

"Wilkinson!" I exclaimed. "Another mutual acquaintance! Is he a spirit with as many sides as there are people to meet, a social genius intersphering with everybody, almost all sorts of a man, and yet not very definitely committed to anything?"

"That's Wilkinson to a hair!" Albert declared. "Mine must be the same one you know. There couldn't be two of him."

"Alas, poor Phil!" I exclaimed. "Reached hell at last, after being on the point of conversion for forty years! Well he could tell me about Mystery Lodge from Tippleton: only he could be counted on just as promptly to tell them all about me."

"Perhaps we had better not talk about him, or he will be turning up," Albert cautioned nervously. "A more universally sympathetic fellow there never was."

"That's true," I agreed. "Think of him dining with the ministers' meeting at noon, and banqueting with the rum sellers that same night!"

"If I were you, I would let him come," Father counselled. "You may be able to get him committed to a Christian life at last. As for the said Mystery Lodge, I watched over you in Tiptleton from the spirit life and I knew of a few things that were shaped out by the inner circle in their lodge room. Let the whole company of them come. By God's help, we will pull through, just as you did in Tiptleton."

A milder, gentler being, in the main, has not often lived than my father; but get him once aroused, you found yourself dealing with the spirit of Marston Moor and of Bunker Hill. It was too late now for hesitation; for the one of whom we had been speaking was already among us. "Wilkinson, old fellow," I said in greeting, "I am glad to meet you again. I only regret the surroundings."

"Yes, it seems strange," Wilkinson answered solemnly; "I did not look to meet you here."

"I am glad to know that you are conscious of being in the wrong place," I answered. "We are here to set before you a door of escape. You used to talk very impressively about your praying mother, and how she died imploring you to meet her in heaven. You haven't met her yet, have you?"

"I wouldn't want to meet her in the crowd I find."

"I'm glad you're not pleased with the crowd!"

I said. "I've seen you in some pretty tough crowds in our time. And again if there was any particularly good crowd gathering, you were quite sure to be with us therein. Now, wouldn't you like to get out of this hell crowd and into the heaven crowd where your mother is?"

"Well, Dominie," Wilkinson answered, "you ask me an honest question, and I suppose you want a straight answer. I always did enjoy a variety in crowds. You remember that Saturday night when you held the meeting by permission in the hotel lobby, and I was with the crowd that kept the glasses chinking all the time in the bar-room. I had to drink and drink hard that night, to keep from bolting into the lobby and getting converted. What held me back was the thought that if I joined your crowd then, I could never come back to the other crowd; but I could stay with the other crowd then and get with your crowd on Sunday. And now if there is any way for me to get to heaven after all, why, I'd like well to be with mother, and with some of the good Methodist preachers I used to know; but then I'd have to leave all the boys down here. They're an awful tough lot, take them as they come; but somehow they mostly like me."

"Philip Wilkinson, you seem altogether the kind of man we wish to find," Father exclaimed eagerly. "When you have given your whole heart to God, you will not thereby lose your in-

terest in hell, but you will be the more disposed to use all your points of contact, that you may win your friends for heaven."

I introduced Father and explained. "He knows you fairly well," I said, "for he was interested in us all when we were together in Tippleton. You remember we used to tell you the same thing; that once you were soundly converted, you could help us swing half the men of Tippleton into the kingdom of God."

"But the trouble was letting loose from them all to make a start," Wilkinson demurred. "Do you remember, Dominie, when I had the pneumonia, and Dominy Weems was away at conference, and the whole town thought I was dying, and you came and asked me if I couldn't look to Christ as my Saviour, and I made out to speak and said, said I, 'I've always tried to do my best'? I knew I was lying when I said it, for often and often I had tried to do my worst. And I felt that the Devil had hold of me and was dragging me down to hell. And I was afraid of him and afraid to die; but I was more afraid of the fellows down on the street, for I knew they were all shaking their heads and saying, 'Poor Wilkinson, he'll get scared now and get religion.' I was ashamed to get converted on my dying bed, so I just pulled myself together with a tremendous effort and I said to myself, 'I won't die: I'll live; and when I get sound and well, I'll go to the next revival meeting and get religion in a first-

class way.' Yes, sir; I believe you saved my life that time, which wasn't what you were most trying to do; but you just scared me into using my will power and getting well. But when I got well, I found myself more tied to the fellows than ever, and I never could take the same interest in going to church again. It seemed as if my heart had got harder than it ever was before, and I think I must have sinned away my day of grace."

I acknowledged to him that I had entertained a corresponding anxiety about him. "I could see the change after your sickness," I said, "and I often reproached myself very deeply for not having been more strenuous with you when you gave me that evasive answer, apparently almost with your dying breath. As in too many other cases, I shrank from agitating you with argument and solemn warning, lest the physician should think I had hastened your end."

"It wouldn't have done any good," Wilkinson's ghost assured me. "I was more scared of getting converted just then, than of coming to hell. What would all the boys say of me forever after, was the biggest thought in my mind."

"My dear sir," Father interposed, "it seems to me that your main trouble was, and still is, that God is less real to you than your companions. You lack a deep conviction of sin. What right have you to elect the society, and join in the practices of wicked men when God calls you to re-

pentance and to the enjoyment of heaven's fellowship? I begin to think you are almost the very greatest sinner I have ever known. With a soul so rich in generous impulses that nearly two centuries of vice have not been able entirely to choke them out, with a clear view of duty, and a frank acknowledgement of your need, you have the audacity to turn your back upon the God who made you, the Saviour who died for you, the mother in heaven praying for you, simply from the lack of that manhood which would enable you to wrench your soul half an inch away from the friendships of hell. You are lonely even every moment for the better friends you have known on earth or whom you might know in heaven. Choosing hell, you have only hell, and you find it narrow and dull as any prison cell. Choose heaven, and you would still have hell thrown in, with all its friendships to be used for God in winning men away from hell. Alfred Wilkinson, I solemnly pronounce you the greatest sinner and the greatest simpleton I have ever known."

"I guess you're about right, Dominie," Wilkinson admitted humbly, "only you don't know it all. A good man like you can't know all the hold sin has on a sinner. It seems like the more I hate it the more I love it. When I kept the saloon, years before your son came to Tippleton, I used to notice that nobody craved liquor like the man whose stomach was burning up with it.

And it was still worse with the awful disease that comes with the other sin. The fellows that had it couldn't think or talk about anything else but the very indulgence that caused it."

"God pity you!" Father cried, and hid the face of his soul.

I asked Wilkinson what he intended to do about it. "You see so clearly exactly where you stand," I said; "you have not even the poor relief of lying to yourself about it. Now are you going to try and stand this to all eternity, or will you put your case just now into the hands of the Great Physician, Doctor Jesus?"

Wilkinson's ghost stood dazed before me. "I wish you had talked to me like that a good deal more in Tiptleton," he slowly said at last. "But here — what's the use of gospel talk in hell?"

"More use perhaps, than there was of it in Tiptleton," I dared to answer. "May God forgive me for having been so unfaithful to you in life; and yet the whole rum-soaked, liquor-license-besotted lot of you seemed so coolly satisfied, often, with your unanimous stand for Satan, a preacher would lose heart, and true words would die on his lips. But it does seem to me you are nearer the kingdom of God than I ever found you before. You and I have both been learning a thing or two, I imagine. I never found a place on earth more receptive of the gospel than the state penitentiary at Churchville. And since I have been led to come among you all here, I be-

gin to think that hell may be, of all others, just the place for gospel talk. And more than that, of all the people I have so far met in hell, you seem to be the proper and most hopeful subject for it. I've seen you almost saved apparently half a dozen times over on earth, Wilkinson, and I just cannot bear not to see you fully saved this time. Tell me truly right out of your heart, wouldn't you like to be saved?"

Perhaps it was because he was taken by surprise to have the offer of salvation pressed upon him in hell; whereas he had always been on his guard against being led ever more than about so far on earth, or perhaps because he had really found the air of hell somewhat freer than that of Tippleton; at any rate, he showed stronger and more genuine emotion than I had ever seen in him before. "God knows," he said, "an hour never goes by that I don't wish most bitterly that I had let myself be saved before I ever came here; but now it's too late. You gentlemen mean well, but you don't really know hell. All the oceans of all the planets couldn't wash the putrid, black depravity out of our souls. All the fires of all the suns couldn't burn it away. We've damned ourselves too deep for the arm of mercy to reach us. There couldn't be a ladder long enough for us to climb by to get out of hell. If one of us should begin to climb now and climb till the Andromeda nebula gets to be a solar system, there would still be an ocean of despair above us

pressing us down and no sunlit waves anywhere at the top of it. You'll say we ought to pray; but how can a man hear himself pray when a knell sounds in his ears loud enough to echo back and forth across the universe, 'Too late! Too late! Too late!' "

I was proud of Joy's husband at this moment. Albert had been keeping in the background and looking anxious since Wilkinson's appearance. Now he came in boldly and said, "Philip Wilkinson, look at me!"

"Who are you, sir?" Wilkinson began, and then as he focussed his attention and began to recognize our companion, it was wonderful to watch the successive waves of deep emotion sweep across the surface of his soul. "I believe you are that man Detwiler," he said. "But oh! what a change! I know you; and yet I hardly know how I know you. The last time I saw you you were so flimsy, and now you've sort of grown and rounded out. You had two or three voices that whistled and sputtered and rumbled all at once; now you speak strong and clear. You had as many combinations as a kaleidoscope, and here you are just one natural complexion, only shining as if there were a soft light inside. What has come over you? If Christian Science has done all this —"

"Christian Science has done nothing for me," Albert replied. "But I've been converted truly to God, and I've just begun really to live."

"What?" cried Wilkinson. "When? Where?"

"Not three hours ago," was the answer; "right here in hell."

Wilkinson trembled all over. "Offended God!" he cried, "there's hope for me!"

When he had fully found peace in believing, we began to talk with him about what was uppermost in our minds at the time of his appearance. Albert explained to him. "These gentlemen," he said, "the Presters, father and son, are concerned to reach the other son, Harry Prester. He's going to be hard to get at, because he has almost only one point of approach: that is machinery; and none of us is particularly mechanical. I knew him when he was a young married man. He talked machines, he saw nothing but machines, his wife said he dreamed machines. You could almost hear the wheels whirring in his head. He was neither bad nor good. He was neither wise nor unwise. He was just motion mad. His father thinks he may have drifted into one of our Presbyterian or Episcopalian churches from force of early or matrimonial association, and I suggested that he might have compromised by joining a lodge. So we thought of you as a man of wide acquaintance, and we hoped that we might get hold of some tie of association that might pull him to us."

"This was their idea, not mine," I demurred. "Harry never was a 'joiner.' I could not even get him interested in the labor movement. But

something my friend, Detwiler, told me about Free Masons in hell aroused my deep interest to know if old Mystery lodge had been perpetuated here. We have their two or three best men in heaven, but they don't keep up the lodge there. They say the church of Christ is free masonry enough for them now."

"Do you think I ought to give up my lodges?" Wilkinson asked humbly. "I was hoping I could use them to bring more men around to the truth."

"Just so you are not drawn into anything sneaky or underhanded," I answered. "You are in a better position to judge about that than I."

"I'd like to try it," he said, "but you'll have to pray for me hard. Yes, I'm sorry to say, old Mystery is flourishing in hell."

"I feared so," I responded sadly. "After Detwiler told me of the existence of the order in these regions, my apprehension was aroused for that lodge in particular. Certainly a number of its members, at the time of my last acquaintance with them, seemed fairly ripe for hell. That was due in the main, no doubt, to this particular lodge's flagrant violation of one of the principles of Free Masonry that no liquor seller should be admitted to the order. But then, I suppose this was no greater irregularity than that some of the most prominent members of the Tiptleton Presbyterian church should have been habitual signers of applications for license."

“Dear Dominie,” Wilkinson said, “I’ve just got to be confidential with you, lodge or no lodge; and I might as well tell you that the few genuine men we had in Mystery lodge when you knew it were just the decoy ducks for the rest of us to set out and make use of. They really didn’t know Free Masonry as we practiced it. They thought we were going by the book. They were never really initiated. Each two of us had his one of them, and we knew how to strain his conscience a little here, and warp his judgment a little there, and by hook or by crook, we managed to keep the thing pretty near unanimous for whiskey and the devil. Sometimes it was nervous work, until we got Dominie Weems into the lodge as a sort of bell wether for all the lambs to follow. After that it went easier. Oh, many’s the laugh we’ve had in hell over the remarkable gambols Weems would eagerly go through, hoping our order would find him a bigger church somewhere. Do you remember that anniversary sermon Mystery came to hear him preach on a certain Sunday night, and how he kept his congregation waiting ten minutes longer, after they had waited twenty minutes already, until the lodge got there, just so we might send back to the lodge room and get his apron to wear over his long coat and preach in? And you remember how he had old Mack lay the corner stone of the new church with appropriate Masonic ceremonies. Everybody knew what that was for.”

"Oh, well, now, Wilkinson," I protested, "you know Brother Weems had the most frankly conscientious motives in working the Masons for a better charge. He told me himself that he had to join the order because he couldn't live on the salary he was receiving in Tippleton. What could you expect, when one of his professors at Drew told him that if he wished to get on in the Methodist ministry he had better join the Masons? He used to say to me, 'Brother Prester, we are simply compelled to take the world as we find it. It is our duty to aspire to the largest sphere of usefulness we can fill, and it is the Masonic order that can obtain it for us.' Really Brother Weems seemed to me in many ways a true-hearted Christian. He was one of the most comforting partners to pray with I ever found on earth."

Here Father reminded us that we had digressed somewhat from the problem of finding Harry. Wilkinson suggested that we should divide our party, and while Father and Joy's husband might visit the churches, he and I might explore among the lodges. An association of mechanical engineers, he said, was about the only organization with which he had had no recollection of ever having had any relations, but he thought if Harry had ever happened to join any other kind of a thing, he could probably get on a trace of him in some way.

The younger Albert expressed his desire to fol-

low the good news back to heaven, to talk it over with his mother, and Wilkinson's mother also; then return and work with our little brotherhood of the Heavenly Vision. So we separated, and Wilkinson and I were very gladly starting on our tour of observation — for Wilkinson, always the most obliging of men, now in the first joy of the great change which had come into his life, showed the greatest eagerness to do us some service — but the sudden appearance of Jeanie brought us to a standstill.

“You are going into danger, dear boy,” she said. “I want you to let me go with you.”

“Now, dear girl,” I protested, “if there really could be any danger, that would be the strongest argument why I should on no account take you with me. Has not Jehovah said, ‘Certainly, I will be with thee’?”

“Yes, but Paul tells us to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,” she replied with a counter quotation. “Why should you put yourself again in the power of these men who have so many ways of accomplishing things. What could you ever accomplish with them?”

“Just now I’ve helped to win this one for God,” I replied cheerfully.

Jeanie regarded Wilkinson somewhat doubtfully. I think she is almost the quickest of her sex in her estimates of people, and perhaps the slowest to change them. I have often declared, and perhaps already in this narrative, that it was

only my great good fortune which prevented her from conceiving a profound suspicion of me when first she set eyes on me. If this had happened, no subsequent amendment, or entire correctness of deportment could quite have won her confidence. This distrust would have been manifested only by a certain guardedness of manner in the course of much gracious kindness, but it would have been like a well-set mine ready to explode on proper occasion.

So she greeted poor Wilkinson now with much frankness of encouragement, and perhaps he did not gather from her tones that she was in reality waiting to see these new hopes of him justified later on.

"We're surely glad of your company," he demurred, "only we just don't quite know how the Masons will take it for us to bring a lady along. You know our order, from its earliest times, has rather fought shy of women."

"Yes, because we could see through you too well," Jeanie responded promptly. "If we are really to find out something, don't you think I had better come? Nat never could see anything but just what people would show him on the surface, until days afterward."

CHAPTER VIII

In the leisure of a resting spell in heaven, talking things over with the angels, Father has given us the details of his connection with the churches of hell; as there was not full opportunity to do when the rush of events brought us together again in the enemy's country.

"In what way do you account for this, that churches exist in hell at all?" he asked Albert, as they were hesitating which way to wish themselves. "What purpose do they fulfil for the inhabitants who support them?"

"I suppose somewhat the same as some churches on earth," was the reply. "They make certain neighborhoods in hell respectable. They afford idle spirits a means of passing the time. They develop an endless variety of enjoyable bones of contention. They give a flavor of sanctity to gossip that otherwise would grow dull for lack of contrast. Incidentally they offer an opportunity for the display of talents of oratory and music in vague connection with certain sacred themes which still retain a languid interest for the minds of the elite of perdition."

"But this I cannot understand," Father persisted, "if churches are maintained in hell, and the people go regularly and sit under the preaching of the gospel, and the doctrines of grace are proclaimed, how can there fail to be genuine con-

versions, and thus hell should even be found to defeat its own ends."

"Yes, but you know you can have churches," Albert answered, "and not preach the gospel at all except in distant allusion; and you can ignore, or slur over, or undermine, or squarely oppose the doctrines of grace, and still call it a church. I am sure we have seen the thing demonstrated often enough in Christendom."

"But from where in this nether world do they procure their ministers? Surely, they must needs train new ones from among bright young men of the world who fail of being saved."

"I am sorry to say the most part of them get their training and their practice in the ministry before they come here," Albert replied. "Some come from Andover and some from Union. There are one or two from Princeton, and the Harvard Divinity School is not without its representation. I perceive that there is a ministers' meeting going on now. What do you say to going there first, and getting in touch with a number of denominations at once?"

Father has tried to describe to us the sensations he experienced when he found himself entering a large assembly of ecclesiastics in hell. Not only ignorant Hard Shell Baptist, Free Methodist, Morning Watch, and Zionite ranters, but men of theological acumen and varied learning were there. Writers of books were particularly in evidence: Erasmus, translator of the

New Testament; Rabelais, most distinguished of clerical rakes; Dean Swift, poor Christless cynic of a tiresome age; Malthus, traducer of God's economy; zealous Theodore Parker also, and numerous would-be reconstructionists of Christianity, concerned in the evolution of a religion for the advanced mind, free from the irrational element of a definite belief in God. Father was not surprised to find a promiscuous rabble of scapegraces in orders whose brief newspaper notoriety had grown out of the attractions of the wine cup or of other men's wives or money, conspicuous as exceptions to the general rule of ministerial probity; but what astonished him was the array of men once high in ecclesiastical authority: metropolitans, popes, cardinals, archbishops, and denominational leaders; two of the Gregorys, the strenuous Innocent III, the sportive Boniface, diplomatic Wolsey, forceful Richelieu, merciless Pole, and uncompromising Laud, together with a distinguished company of Spanish inquisitors, New England persecutors, and Russian Synodists.

Father's first impulse was to retire modestly and discreetly from an assembly of churchmen so far outranking him. His confusion was still further increased when he had distinguished several who had even been men of fine appearing character under earth's most favorable conditions, only lacking the one thing needful, a vital faith in Christ. Still more astonishing, there were some

who had been conspicuously used of God from Balaam down. On recognizing some belonging to this most eminent class of all, Father's soul was seized with a violent trembling. "Why," he exclaimed, "are these grand men the denizens of hell, when one whose life can boast such small results as mine has found a home in heaven?" Then our Lord reminded him of his own word, "Notwithstanding, rejoice not in this, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." "I am one of the last that were to be first," he said to himself proudly yet humbly, and decided to stay and take in the program.

This, for the occasion, proved to be a setting forth by a gifted Episcopalian divine of the "Incredibility of a Virgin Birth." Its theory was unfolded in humble acquiescence with the infallibility of the gospel according to Darwin. Before he was through, Father says he began to feel that it would almost be presumption in God himself to question the Sublime Hypothesis. Indeed, the trend of the leader's thought was such as to leave very little room for God in His world, all occasion for any special activity on His part being entirely and satisfactorily filled by the unaided workings of an impersonal process. Yet the whole exposition was put forward in seemly and pious sounding language. It was not so much what the man said, much less the manner of its saying, that made it atheistic.

In the languid discussion that followed, there was not much noticeable effort to combat anything. No one seemed to have any serious convictions to express, one way or another. The object of each appeared to be to scintillate something glittering and not too definite, mingling compliment and criticism in equal proportions. One said that perhaps it did not matter so much whether Christ was of virgin birth, or the child of wedlock, or of that humbler origin to which the accredited facts of the case seemed to point; the main purpose of his life may have been to demonstrate the natural rather than the supernatural incarnation of Deity in us each. "I, myself," he blandly enlarged, "I, myself, am God manifested, individualized, forming into definite shape and tangible reality. Jesus was thus, in some respects, a striking and outstanding individualization of Deity; though born, no doubt, like any other man."

Then, at the close of the discussion, they repeated the Apostles' Creed in concert with a certain lackadaisical unction, and after one of the prelates, on request, had prayed, using the Gregorian collect appointed for Trinity Sunday, each hurried away, absent-mindedly passing by the others.

"What puzzles me," Father confessed to his guide, "is the problem of how they can hold their congregations together with this line of talk.

If nothing is definitely certain, what is the use of preaching about it?"

"And yet somehow," Albert replied, "the laity of perdition itself would a little rather not have things made too definite; still, the clergy never talk quite the same in the pulpit as in the ministers' meetings. This we have heard was esoteric. Before their congregations they talk to suit the market."

Father became familiar with this ministers' meeting during the troubled course of his brief pastorate in hell, attending it faithfully in the wistful endeavor to work in a little vital Christianity, and he has given me some idea of the general run of topics they had under discussion. "Is the Bible Readable Literature?" "The Evolution of God." "Improbable Immortality." "The Irrationality of the Punitive Idea." "Why Do We Pray?" "The Unknowableness of the Absolute." "Imperfections of the Universe." "Is Happiness Attainable?" "The Unreality of the Moral Intuition." "Origin of the Idea of God." Such topics as these, interspersed with reviews on thought books of agnostic science lately issued, supplied the straw to be thrashed over by these clerical gatherings.

Father said he used often to wonder if it was really a ministers' meeting or that of an infidel club. I assured him that I had sometimes, upon early acquaintance, to rub my eyes and look again

at the neckwear in the ministers' meeting at the city of my first New England pastorate. Afterwards, when I became somewhat used to their way of talking, I learned to understand them better, and found numbers of them high-souled Christian men.

Father undertook to have a serious talk with the Vicar of Bray at one of these meetings while they were waiting for the chairman. "Do you think it is of so much consequence what a man believes or professes," the versatile vicar replied, "so long as his life is fairly correct?"

"On the contrary," Father stoutly asserted, "I am altogether old-fashioned enough to think that the most damnable thing in this universe is false doctrine flippantly set forth."

"This seems a roundabout way to reach the churches, much more my poor wandering boy," Father complained to Albert when that first ministers' meeting attended in hell adjourned and so suddenly melted away.

"I clutched at one or two of them, but in vain," Albert replied, ruefully. "I have been trying to think what we shall do next, to get at the churches. The man I think of most hopefully is old Deacon Spindler. You remember he knew Harry. He's in hell, I know, for I caught a glimpse of him, one time, slipping in the back way into a spooks' dance hall with that other woman he got to living with back on the Trace

Ford of Mud Creek after his third wife died."

Thus it was that Father came to receive his call to the pastorate of the First Presbyterian church of Jeroboam's Holl in hell. Deacon Spindler appeared, still cherishing the affection which the humblest and most unworthy often dared to manifest for Father; even, sometimes, in an embarrassing manner. There was really only one thing so radically wrong in the deacon, a man of an excellent family, and of a rather clinging disposition. His joy at meeting father again found expression in a prompt invitation that he should preach at the Holl. "Our church is without a pastor just now," Spindler explained, "and I am chairman of the supply committee."

Of course they were charmed with father's preaching. His style is so scholarly, urbane, classical, quaintly earnest, yet never too personal. I suppose they were carried away by an impulse; at any rate they gave him a call which the commissioners assured him was unanimous. Father never was capable of looking askance at a pastoral call, and the very pitifulness of this one, he assured us, appealed irresistibly to his tenderness.

"And yet you did not really have to accept it," I reminded him. "You might simply have held it as pastor-elect, by agreement with their presbytery."

"I wished to strengthen such modicum of life as might be left in the church," father answered. "They seemed almost half inclined to relinquish

having a church, and they needed someone who would manifest a confidence in their better impulse."

"But Father," Jeanie asked, "we are all wondering what it was in their call which recommended it to you at all."

"There was nothing to recommend it. I accepted it in sheer pity," father replied. "Your mother knows that I did the same thing more than once on earth. They appeared to be in so deplorable a condition that I deemed I could do them scant harm, at any rate. There was a church quarrel in customary progress among them, and they were also weakened almost to the point of sheer extinction by the competition of local churches of other denominations. I hoped that they might be somewhat humbled by all the conceivable and inconceivable congregational tribulations through which they had been passing, and that so I would find them grateful for self-denying help, and prepared to receive real good. They truly bore evidence of experiencing a hopeful dissatisfaction with past spiritual attainments and a wistful outreach of soul for something vital; and I thought how much easier it might be to preach the gospel in hell through a regularly established church, holding to the Westminster standards, than to continue working, as it were, out of doors."

"But did the gospel preaching keep on pleasing them?" I queried.

“Yes, for a time,” Father answered. “My claim to have come from heaven drew large congregations, and for a while there were evidences of a quickening in the life of the church which caused me great hopes. But presently I overheard one or two thoughts after a service which awakened me most rudely from my happy dream. It became increasingly evident that what I had taken for quickened spirituality was but little more than an unholy glee in the minds of the Presbyterians over the drawing of people from other churches in the Holl. I began to suspect that they were regarding me and my message somewhat in the light of an asset, and of a shrewd church investment. I would think these Monday thoughts, after the times of our solemn assemblies; but when I was preaching to audiences so vastly larger than any I had ever addressed on earth, and they would listen so circumspectly, so respectfully, and join in with the worship with such propriety and decorum, I could not find it in my heart to suspect anything so unworthy in them. Yet I could not rid myself of the suspicion that at the least they were inclined to listen to my preaching and solo singing too much as the tribes of the Jews in captivity were inclined to listen to the prophesyings of Ezekiel, that I might be unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument, for, truly, they heard my words, but they did them not. I found that my fame as

a preacher was spreading to other parts. I was invited by the pastor of one of the great metropolitan churches to occupy his pulpit on a certain Sunday in hell —”

“Why, do people observe Sunday there?” mother cried, interrupting Father’s account, that time in heaven.

“Yes, somewhat after the fashion in which they observed Sunday on earth,” Father replied. “There was not a very great deal in that to interfere with the pleasures of hell.”

“But how did they separate the time, and call it a day?” asked my boy, Thoughtful.

“I think it began by reason of the theories of some Seventh Day Baptists,” father replied. “Finding themselves in hell through trusting in their sectarian observances rather than trusting in Christ, some of them elected to keep strict watch of earth time still, and observe the seventh day. Thus the other sects around them were stirred to make a convention of the first day, earth time, and to observe that punctiliously for argument’s sake.”

“But you are not telling us of your experience, preaching in the grand pulpit,” I suggested.

“Oh, that was too dreadful!” Father declared. “I can hardly bear to think of it. It transpired that a new choir was being installed in its duties in this church at the very time that I was to preach. On approaching the assembly I became aware of a certain program or bulletin of the

service which was being disseminated and which set forth with great dignity and succinctness the names of the musical composers whose productions were to be rendered on that occasion, and whether they were to be sung or played in E flat, or D sharp, or B minor, as well as also the names of the musical artists belonging to the new choir who were thus to distinguish themselves. The program incidentally mentioned that the Reverend Jonathan Prester, the silver-tongued celestial visitant of Jeroboam's Holl would make the address. My attention was also very kindly called by the pastor before we took our places in view of the congregation to an item of news in the last issue of the Tophet Echo with regard to the rumor that the nominating committee of the Central Congregational Church of Broad Gauge City, a church at that time in search of a pastor, intended to be present at this service, led there by interest in the rising fame of the Reverend Prester.

"The early part of the service was rendered by the new choir," so Father continued, "with some slight occasional assistance from the pastor and congregation, and consumed all the time taken by earth's sunrise in progressing from Boston to Chicago. The music seemed to be all of it upon sacred themes, so far as the themes of it could possibly be made out; and as music it seemed to contain all the elements of art, except that it apparently expressed nothing. There was

no clear appeal to the understanding; consequently the heart was not stirred. It had diminuendo, crescendo, pause, staccato, allegro, andante, everything almost but a meaning. It was *vox et præterea nihil*. The time spent in it was empty of aught but sound. While it was proceeding, I found it impossible to think connectedly on the subject matter of my sermon; so I was reduced to prayer and to observing the ways of the congregation, assembled and assembling. I noted the deference accorded certain spirits who had achieved prominence. People took position according to their standing in the appreciation or the envy of those around them. I could see their heartburnings of envy, and hear all their angry or slavish thoughts. An insight and an understanding were given me greater than I had ever known before. I noted the anxious strain for the finest attainable appearance with which each individual or each family strove to advertise its station and its competitive success. I became conscious of the hidden things of the souls and lives before me. Hypocrisy, deceit, estrangement, hatred, pride, vainglory, carping criticism, lustful desires, and an infinite unrest of evil simmered in the heated atmosphere of fevered souls. I began to hear an inner discord in all the smart effects of the music that was being rendered, which told what each singer was really thinking as he sang. At last, after I had thought even for the tenth time that they would have the ser-

mon come in next, a woman spirit was put forward to sing a solo. This time the sense could not wholly be hidden, for I recognized at once Franz Abt's own 'Oh, Ye Tears!' 'Ah!' I thought, 'this is the song! How much hell needs tears!' I looked eagerly to see what the effect upon the congregation would be. A change indeed came over many of them, but it was not the softening for which I hoped. It was more a shallow wave of admiration, and when my own sight cleared to the ability to scan them more closely I realized that it was a sort of sexual admiration. Then I turned my soul's gaze upon the singer, to whom I had been content simply to listen hitherto. Oh, I cannot tell you what I saw! An enchantress so bedizzened, *decolletté*, bared to the view, and shamelessly enticing, made up and partially attired to tempt men while she sang mincingly of holy things! A sickening revulsion of feeling came over me. I realized that I myself was being tempted, even as Jesus was tempted upon the mountain top, by the attraction of a great career as a leading divine, a plan of compromise for the saving of all hell wholesale by means of a moderate deference to Satan. What could I do? I covered my soul, and fled from the assembly."

"But, Great, Great, Great Grandpapa!" anxiously interposed our youngest, Content, "what did they do at church when the preacher of the day had fled?"

"I never knew," he answered with a soul shudder. "I determined in that hour that I would willingly plunge to the bottom of the lowest dive in hell for the purpose of saving a lost soul, but I would never, never willingly attend one of their fashionable churches so long as hell remained to hold one. That resolution I have kept to the letter, for I was only at one when haled for my trial before the Presbytery."

"You!" we all exclaimed at once, and my Mother asked, "Dear, innocent man! what could they find to try *you* for?"

"It was a heresy trial," Father answered humbly. "In order to make the situation clear, it is necessary that I should relate briefly something of my later experience with the Holl Church. I went back to them more than ever thankful for the forlorn and dispirited condition in which I had found them, and still trusting that in gratitude for my success in setting their church upon its legs, I might find them willing to let me lead it, however wobblingly, upward to higher things. One line of thought upon which I had been preaching to them was concerning the need of a genuine revival of pure and undefiled religion in their midst; but hitherto I had not been able to obtain from them a response in real unison of soul on this subject. The few who were inclined to declare themselves definitely, said some one thing, some another. Spindler was for revival, but I could not feel that he was moved by any-

thing deeper than his affection for me, and his hankering after excitement. You remember how he used always to pray, when called upon in meeting, that the Lord would send down his Spirit and 'shake this whole commoonity.' But when the time for special evangelistic meetings came about, and Christians first were asked to set the example of repentance and turning from sin, Brother Spindler did not come out quite clearly for a better life; but on the contrary, began to gravitate toward a back seat, and became painfully irregular in his attendance. In the minds of the other outspoken ones of my church in Jeroboam's Holl there appeared to be many conscientious scruples, grave questionings, lingering doubts, disinterested hesitations, also much deprecating concern upon the subject of revivals in general, and especially upon the suitableness of the present time for revival effort. I found that another word would need to be used than the scriptural word, 'revival'; else no unanimity could be arrived at. I tried the man-made paraphrase of 'special evangelistic effort,' which I began to urge strenuously upon them. But first they said they thought it better not to have special efforts, but to depend upon the regular services and the stated means of grace; then presently the session waited upon me in a body to suggest that the regular preaching upon evangelistic themes was beginning to cause a falling off in attendance upon our services. Especially they felt reluc-

tantly drawn to deprecate the invitations to make public decisions for Christ with which I had endeavored to conclude some of the preaching services. They felt that these decisions were more apt to be genuine and lasting when made in private. Also I observed for myself," Father said, "that whatever might be the manner in which I endeavored to draw the gospel net, my effort invariably resulted in evident embarrassment to the church members. They could not readily or gracefully set the example of acknowledging a living faith in Christ, or, indeed, of confessing any definite allegiance to the doctrines known as evangelical. Observing reluctantly the strain and awkwardness brought upon the regular church services by any public appeal for conversions, I suggested to the session and to the congregation that we ought at least to institute, in addition to these, some form of rescue mission work for the mass of unconverted people around us. Receiving no definite response, I endeavored upon my individual responsibility to lead the way in such outside evangelistic effort. But my own church members shunned the time and place of all such attempts, and soon began to complain that they were taking my time and strength from my regular pastoral work and pulpit preparation. The one or two outcast spirits which were converted to Christ by our solitary efforts in this direction, Albert's and mine, found only a constrained welcome into the number of the Holl Church people.

They were, unfortunately, not of the social class and sphere in hell to cause them to be looked upon as desirable additions to their church. I began to be conscious of a certain subtle divergence of feeling between pastor and congregation by reason of my interest in such people. Simultaneously I had been endeavoring to develop in their prayer meeting a line of supplication for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; but, to my dismay, the prayer meeting itself went into a pathetic decline under my pastorate. I had found this almost a flourishing part of their church life; at least so it had seemed at the beginning of my pastoral relation with them. This was one of the things that drew me to them in the start, and inspired me with some hope for their future that the prayer meeting was well attended and that many seemed disposed to take part in it; only there was that in its exercises which, by some means, continually reminded me of a saying of a certain Methodist divine of the old school not infrequently repeated at the period of my boyhood to the effect that 'the prayers of Presbyterians were cold enough to freeze hell over.' Truly, the public efforts in prayer of these particular Presbyterians of Jeroboam's Holl in hell seemed somewhat designed to fulfill that especial purpose. They were so formal, so stereotyped, so smirk in their self-satisfaction, that they made it difficult, at times, to believe one's self in a division of God's cosmos where anything was confessedly in need

of improvement. I recall one of them, Rorer by name, whose prayers even seemed to have a certain ring of defiance in them, as though he were saying in undertone, 'Stand back, Almighty; you can do nothing till I get through.'

"This reminds me, Nathaniel," Father digressed, "this Rorer's name seemed in some way to be associated with that country place in Pennsylvania called Serenity, where you found your Jeanie. He came to us at the Holl by letter from a much more pretentious church of our denomination, almost at the beginning of the first rising tide of our prosperity. I asked him if he had known you on earth, and he denied the suggestion; but Albert, here, knew him and assured me that he had had some converse with you about him prior to his own conversion in hell."

"Father," I asked, "did this Rorer carry himself quite erect, with a courageous bearing something like a snake that is prepared to strike and anticipate any blow, or, at the worst, meet it half way?"

"Just so," he replied, "and I have other reasons for thinking he exercised a sinister and serpentine influence upon the course of my ill-starred pastorate. But to return to the subject of our prayer meetings; one and another voice became mute, as though by some strange spell, and one and another form came to be missed as time went on. I am mentally sure it was not because I upbraided them. I endeavored not to let them ob-

serve how much their prayers and remarks saddened me. But I could not pray as they did, and they would not pray as I did; so they seemed to lose interest. Only Albert and the one or two new converts God gave me kept on taking part in the meeting with growing power of spirituality. At last there came a prayer meeting when only these were present (although Spindler also could be dimly perceived hovering near in apparent dejection), but at its close came the bearers of the summons before the Presbytery."

"Who were your accusers?" exclaimed Mother in righteous indignation. "Oh, my husband! and I never missed you from heaven!"

"I have been living in both worlds," Father answered simply, "and I did not wish to sadden your heart. Besides, it would have been impossible to bring you into touch with hell, until God should turn your own thoughts in that direction. One complainant was a neighboring minister by the name of Raxton, and the other was an elder of a third church in the Presbytery."

Something in Father's tone made us ask if it was any one we knew.

"It was that son of Aunt Fannie McCracken," Father said quietly. "Hush! do not allow your mind to dwell on her, or she will be here, and the dear old lady will be sadly disturbed. Can you recall the visit he paid his mother? He was divorced from his wealthy wife, and he suffered from spells of delirium tremens, but he was sound

in his orthodoxy and well versed in the Westminster standards. He loved only one thing more than to defend the five points of Calvinism."

I could remember him better than the others, for it was again in the summer of my life, when I was preaching during my first vacation from the theological seminary in my Father's place in the Valley of Summer, that this McCracken came to cheer Aunt Fannie with another month's visit. He it was who passed judgment upon my first crude pulpit efforts, 'that the young man would do better if he would quote less from Carlyle and Emerson and more from the Bible.' I came to be very grateful to him for that in after years, and I was sorry now, to hear Father's account of him in hell. He told us McCracken had come to him at the first meeting of their infernal Presbytery which Father attended. He had heard of Father's claim to be a visitor from heaven come to tell lost spirits of a larger hope, and he immediately began to argue the doctrinal bearing of such a conception. "Your evangel is fundamentally opposed to Calvinism," was his sentence. "Where would the doctrine of election go, if we should admit any possibility of continued probation? Did not God from all eternity foreordain some to eternal life, and others to eternal damnation?"

"I was somewhat taken aback by this challenge," Father recounted, "and it seemed only such a short time since I had been arguing from his standpoint with Nathaniel here in heaven, I

really hardly knew how to meet such a born polemic in argument on an abstract doctrinal issue, so I cast about in my mind, and finally asked him point blank what bearing he thought the doctrine of election had upon his own chances of eternal happiness. He answered me with astonishing frankness, 'I am in hell by præterition,' he said. 'God's electing grace passed me by from all eternity. He was the potter and I was the clay, and He made of me a vessel unto dishonor.'

" 'And what is the feeling of your heart toward God for this?' I asked him.

" 'I have no right to indulge any feeling,' he answered. 'It was all for His own glory; for which cause, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, God endured me with much long suffering, a vessel of wrath, fitted to destruction.'

" At this answer I was all but speechless," Father proceeded. "'The thing which fills me with wonder,' at last I ventured to suggest, 'is that you continue to engage in the worship of such a God.'

" 'I was brought up to go to church,' was his answer. 'I take a pride in doing my part. I believe in upholding right doctrine. I happened into a part of hell where shouting Arminianism was rampant, and there was a struggling Presbyterian church, like the one of which you are pastor, endeavoring to uphold the truths of Calvin-

ism and the sober decencies of sedate and dignified worship. They desired me to unite and be an elder, and while I could not claim to be converted, by reason of never having been elected unto repentance, I said to them, 'Anything to beat the Methodists!' and joined the church and was ordained for an elder, declaring my adherence to the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster standards, and my determination to uphold them, a determination in which I have never flinched, and shall never flinch.'

"I said to him, 'I am fain to think you are the very wickedest man I have ever known.'

"'How can you say that?' he demanded in angry astonishment.

"I replied, 'You blame all your depravity on God's predestination, and you take an apparent pride in doing more for God than you think God has been willing to do for you. You dishonor the Saviour who died for you, the God who gave you all the advantage of careful Christian training, as well as the birthright of membership in His visible church, and you dishonor and affront, at every breath of thought you draw, that Holy Spirit of God which has been working mightily for your salvation through generations antedating your birth, and even down to the present moment, turning your mind to an interest in spiritual things, making you zealous and jealous for the faith once delivered to the saints — imperfectly as you seem to have grasped it — and working

mightily for your conviction of sin and conversion to holiness.'

"He answered in a set and deliberate tone, 'If I had been called and predestinated, I would have gotten converted before my brain softened and death came to vary my torment.'

"'How do you surely know,' I asked him, 'that you are not predestined to be saved, even in the torment of hell?'

"'That is your heresy,' he answered. 'You are tempting me to let slip the faith of my fathers. If I can be saved in hell, and anybody can be saved, and everybody, most likely, is destined to be saved, in the end; then there are no elect ones. Where every one is elect, none are elect. Consequently your whole doctrine is subversive of the truth.'

"I could only assure him," Father confessed to us, "that I could not claim a positive conviction as yet whether all souls were to be saved, except that I was beginning to wonder if God's universe could finally be considered altogether a satisfactory success, unless its history should culminate in some such consummation. But I could not surely see why there might not be an election for each æon, an election to salvation during the mortal life, or during the immortal life. 'Is not this,' I asked him, 'the key to the whole mystery of predestination, that God's election, viewed from the standpoint of His timeless existence, is practically synchronous with our choice of Him?'

Is it strictly scientific ever to speak of Deity in the past tense? Christ says, 'Before Abraham was, I AM.' If you had chosen to submit your will to God's will in your childhood, or in the midst of any one of your drunken domestic sprees, you would have found yourself one of God's elect. You can make a practical demonstration of this even here and now at the present time, McCracken,' I urged. 'Why not leave theorizing for a moment and bow your soul with me before God? Wickedly as you have thought and lived, I am constrained to believe there may be mercy yet for you. Salvation is still for you to choose or to reject. Turn or burn; which shall it be? ' "

"And still he did not repent?" we asked Father.

"I am grieved to suspect," Father replied, "that McCracken was not really willing to be saved at the expense of broadening his theology and giving up sin. What he said to me was, 'You are no true Presbyterian. Your system is Arminian of the most ultra type.' And with that he left me, and I perceived him conferring privily with Rorer and with several members of the Presbytery; but he intersphered with me no more, until he came, after that almost deserted prayer meeting, bearing my summons before the Presbytery for trial on the charge of heresy."

CHAPTER IX

“Tried for heresy!” Mother exclaimed. “You! My precious husband! My lamb in the midst of wolves! Of all the people in the world! *Did they mean it seriously?*”

“It was not easy to take it with suitable seriousness,” Father replied. “At various times in private and at the ministers’ meeting, I had heard members of this same presbytery express almost every shade of belief and of unbelief. It was difficult to foresee how they could succeed in reaching an agreement on any doctrinal verdict. My learned protagonist had hardly concluded his statement of the charge against me, before the whole Presbytery flew into a state of interrogation, protestation, explanation, asseveration, allegation, reconsideration, and general objurgation, with regard to the phraseology of the indictment, the subject matter of each of its counts, the application of its various quotations from the standards of the church and from various deliverances of their general assembly (or of lower judicatories) in former cases; as well as over various and sundry questions of constitutional procedure in the present trial. The task of their moderator was rendered more difficult by reason of their post-mortem facility in all speaking at once, and each distinctly and simultaneously following all that the others had to say.

This made it exceedingly difficult at times to determine which rightfully held the floor.

“One distinguishable party opposed the charge against me, because, as they objected, ‘It tacitly concedes the strange presumption of the accused that this is hell.’ So they moved to amend the phraseology of my indictment by striking out certain words and phrases here and there and substituting or interjecting certain other words and clauses; so that it should state as a whole the distinct condemnation of the presbytery upon ‘the heresy that there is a hell and that this is it.’ The amendment was carried over the vigorous and long continued opposition of Raxton, McCracken, and those of like belief with them who protested that such an addition to, and wresting of the purpose of the charge would involve its original framers themselves in an invidious charge of heresy.

“Then some one moved that my whole trial be put into the hands of a judicial commission; as to conduct it in public would inevitably embarrass many members, in forcing them to express personal convictions or hesitations of belief which they would prefer not to make public; even if it should not result in doctrinally incriminating each member of the presbytery in the opinion of certain other members. This motion was carried; but the effort to select such a judicial commission proved abortive, by reason of each member having a majority against his election and eligi-

bility to a place on the committee as being above suspicion in his orthodoxy. By sheer necessity a motion to reconsider was carried, and the presbytery resolved itself into a committee of the whole.

“A great time having thus been taken up in coming back to the point where they were at the beginning, it occurred to some one to propose that they proceed to examine the accused. Here the presbytery found itself in difficulties again, some thinking best first to examine witnesses to establish the truth or falsity of such and such erroneous and heretical utterances as were charged against me ever having been promulgated by me, while others contended that time would be saved by giving me an opportunity to plead guilty or not guilty, of denying or admitting that these expressions of opinion were indeed my own, and explaining to the presbytery by what course of internal reasoning I could conscientiously hold such convictions and reconcile them with the doctrines of the Presbyterian confession. Then several members began to protest at once and with vehement reiteration, that if I were allowed to speak before the witnesses for the prosecution were examined; I would inevitably prejudice the minds of many in favor of my new theology. The contrary part, however, clung to their opinion, and there was much searching of precedents, and much arguing upon certain rulings and interpretations contained in

Hodge's compendium; until Presbytery was threatened with a deadlock, and the chair was appealed to for its decision, which was averse to hearing me first. Then a motion to overrule the ruling of the moderator was put forward; but the moderator refused to entertain the motion, and declined to vacate the chair in order that the motion might be put by another. Thereupon the Stated Clerk solemnly declared the moderator to be exceeding his prerogatives, proving his declaration by reference to the Form of Government, and Rules of Procedure, and finally moved the impeachment of the moderator and the election of some other in his place. This led to a forensic contest so stormy and protracted that there was imminent danger of the Presbytery splitting into two halves and dismembering me between them, each faction being unwilling to waive the gratification of going on with my trial. Finally a compromise motion was proposed that I and the witnesses against me should be examined at one and the same time, and this motion; although with some demurring; was finally carried by force of sheer exhaustion.

“It was hard to follow the examination of the witnesses while myself subjected to the most varied and simultaneous questioning; but I remember most distinctly the testimony of elder Rorer, who when called to the witness stand came with great apparent reluctance, protesting against the invidiousness of being required to testify against

his own pastor. They asked him how long he had known me and what his motives had been in joining the Holl church after my pastorate had begun, and whether he had ever known any one by our name in this or the mortal life, and what his own doctrinal bias had been, and whether in his eldership on earth over the little Mount Latitude Church in the vicinity of the village of Serenity, he had ever given expression to views endorsing the doctrine known as that of the Millenial Dawn, and finally, after much explanation and evasion, and some objection on the part of the counsel for the prosecution, he was brought to answer the question whether he had ever, in public or in private, and on what and how many occasions heard me declare, and also with what varieties of expression, with what guarding of points and shadings of meaning, my belief in the proposition that men could be saved from hell; even if this were hell; by long delayed repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ. Also he was examined to determine if these pulpit deliverances of mine had seemingly been given out for the purpose of subverting the doctrinal standards of the great Presbyterian church.

“To this last question the witness replied with a defiant protest that he was on the stand to state facts, and not to reveal his own inner sentiments and opinions with regard to what he had become cognizant of: that no one could com-

pel him to incriminate his own pastor in this manner. So in effect the questioners were quite satisfied of Rorer's conviction; and turned their attention somewhat languidly to other witnesses, finding more interest apparently in the cross examination of the plaintiff which was progressing simultaneously; only when my heart would warm to an earnest setting forth of the vital truths of eternal salvation in Christ, many of them would feel impelled to increase the hubbub of calling and questioning one and another possible or impossible witness for the prosecution; as if to distract attention from what I was trying to say."

"Poor man! What an ordeal!" was our involuntary exclamation.

"Yes," Father replied, "I was reminded somewhat of the examination on his confession of a belief in future probation through which poor Nathaniel here was put by the Rapidan presbytery. Only this was as much more strenuous as hell could make it. They asked me all about my earthly ministry, and if I had ever been up before presbytery on a similar charge—"

"Which you could emphatically deny." Mother interjected.

"They were also particular to inquire," Father continued smilingly, "if I had ever been subjected to Universalist influence, either in my New England childhood, or during my short pastorate over the ancestral church at Scituate, which afterwards went over to Universalism, or

by the reading of literature disseminated in the propaganda of that cult. To all of these questions I could answer that I had been distinctly opposed to liberalism in theology in all its forms, even under all the broadening influences of heaven and quite up to the very recent occasion of my sudden call to witness the illumination of mission work in hell in response to my son's fervent wish for my presence in the nether spirit world at that moment. At this they inquired if I could give them any proof that there was a heavenly state different from their own, and that I had actually been in it, and that there was such a thing going on in hell, (if this were hell) as real *bona fide* mission work conducted by spirits sent from heaven. In reply, I asked them to examine Albert, and he testified most manfully of the vision of heaven which broke up the Christian Science meeting, of his own conversion, and of the panoramic glimpse of hell's mission work which came soon after, together with my sudden appearance in their midst, whereas he had never seen me in hell before.

“The two who had been won to Christ by my attempts at a mission in connection with, but outside of the Holl church also acknowledged their conversion to a living faith in Christ and in heaven; and when interrogated as to whether they had received their reward of entrance into heaven, and if so, why they were still found continuing to sojourn in what they had of late been

taught to look upon as hell; they replied that they were not as yet deeply concerned over a delay in their getting into heaven; since heaven itself had already gotten into them. They had found Christ, and the finding of Christ was heaven. But they had already also perceived themselves to be lifted into what they felt to be the outer fringe of heaven, and as for lingering in hell they were well pleased to be found there at this present time; in order that they might witness in behalf of the one who had brought them to a knowledge of their Saviour.

“Perceiving that they were not likely to gain great strength of unfavorable impression from the examination of these; the prosecution again called me to the stand and interrogated me as to my method of reconciling the belief in probation in hell with the teachings of Scripture. I replied that I had always until recently supposed that they could not be reconciled the one with the other, and that only since I had come face to face with the unyielding and radiant fact of God’s everlasting mercy moving to save lost souls in hell had I found myself put to it to cast about mentally for some method of interpreting Scripture which might bring me out in theory where I found myself in fact. I had looked again into the Bible treasured in my heart, and to my joy and comfort had found it plentifully sprinkled over with statements of God’s unchangeable attributes of mercy, goodness and truth, of

His unwillingness that any should perish, and of His intention in Christ to save His *kosmos*, to bring it to believe in His son, to take away its sin, to reconcile it unto Himself, and even to make of it a new sky of stars and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. I found and understood that God decrees and definitely purposes to put all things under Christ's feet. I found the evidences in His word that He Himself is working at the problem of evil, and that He expects to solve it and resolve it, and to work out a demonstration in which all can rejoice at last.

"From Genesis even unto Revelation, I had found the claim that God rules the world and His kingdom is everlasting, and that it ruleth over all, and that it will ultimately triumph until the deepest voices and the mightiest thunderings of heaven and earth shall make proclamation, 'Alleluiah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!' I had found the promise that God would wipe away the tears from off all faces, and the claim of Jesus, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all unto me.' I had learned to believe with Paul that the renewing power of God's grace would work a work as wide as the deadening power of man's sin, and that as in Adam all die so in Christ shall all be made alive. So I was beginning with Peter to hope in a final restitution of all things which might efface from the heart of the world even the last scar of sin's deep wounding.

"Even amid the gloom and the horror of hell

had this sustaining vision been granted me. Without it, I told them, I could not have endured the burden of my pastorate in hell, with its hope deferred of achieving any good. I could bear to strive and fail, hoping surely at last that God's world would be no failure; that in the final winding up of its affairs, no part would stand forth as sheer tragedy; but that all the sin and shame and sorrow of it; the malignity, the misunderstanding, the hate and the heart-ache alike must soften and resolve itself at last into the melodrama of all conquering, all compensating grace.

"I admitted to their questioning that there remained yet many mysteries into which, with the angels, I desired to look; but that I thought I had come upon the key to the darkest of these where I found Albert Detwiler kneeling in penitence on the floor of hell. Since then I had been looking forward to see God showing, more and more, the reason for the permission of evil in the world, vindicating it by the greater good, the mellowed joy, the broadened thought, the deepened love, the ecstasy of pardon *in extremis*, the strength won only from conflict, the patience of the ages, the trust made perfect in One able to save unto the uttermost, the experience of an infinite salvation working out an eternal hope. I acknowledged to them my deepening conviction that even hell itself had come to be, in order

to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now even as never quite before, to all principalities and powers and deepest inquiring minds of the universe might be made known, through the ministry of grace in hell itself, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus. So of late I had been growing and stretching and rising as it were upon tip-toe to look forward, even sometimes as through a blur to tears, to that 'one far-off, divine event toward which the whole creation moves'; and to foresee, in faith, that consummation when at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, not only of things in heaven, and things on earth, but also of things under the earth, and when every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. I was coming to believe, as never before, that of the increase of His government and of His peace there should be no end, that the stone cut out of the mountain without hands should continue to grow until it filled not only the whole earth, but the whole universe, and that God would overturn and overturn and overturn Satan's dominion, until He should come to it whose right it is and God would give it to Christ and His dominion would be from sea of glory to sea of long despair, and from the river of life

flowing from the throne even to the ends of the immensity of infinite existence, to which there are no bounds nor ends.

“During all my life which had been lived on earth, and lately, by God’s wonderful grace, in heaven, I had been strangely blinded to these plain teachings of God’s revelation; but now since seeing with my own astonished sight what Christ could do for a repentant sinner in the prison house of hell, I had come in one rapturous bound to the assurance that God had indeed put all things under Christ’s blessed nail-pierced feet; and that no heart could eternally steel itself against His love, but must some day own His sovereignty, not in the impotence of curbed rebellion; but in the loyalty and unspeakable gratitude of a heart won over, of a spirit saved even from the pit. I told them to their set faces that there was a time coming, I would fain believe, decreed in God’s sure plan, when even they, from the all but hopeless depths of the hypocrites’ portion, would be snatched as brands from the burning, and when their natures, most grievously discordant, because only a shade of a tone out of pitch with God’s anthem of salvation, would yet join in perfect harmony in heaven’s new song at that coming *saengerfest*, when every creature, both which is in heaven, and on the earth and also which is under the earth and in the sea, even all that are in them shall be heard saying, ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that

sitteth upon the throne and unto the lamb, forever and ever.' Thus I had come to this principle of interpretation, only wondering why I had never come to it before, that when we seem to find diverse truths in the Word of God, we should endeavor loyally to accept them each to the stretch of our finite reasoning powers; but we should strive toward a unity of thought by clinging most tenaciously to those truths which present God in a worthy light, which carry forward the lines upon which the main trend of prophecy, of evangel, and of history have revealed God's unswerving purpose, and we should endeavor to reconcile all other scriptural affirmations with these. Over against the parables of the wise and foolish virgins, of the wheat and tares, of the draught of good and evil fishes, of Dives and Lazarus, of the unprofitable servant, it behooves us to place those of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the leaven, the 'other sheep,' the prodigal son, together with all the gracious invitations of the gospel, Christ's prayer upon the cross for his enemies, which was partly fulfilled at Pentecost, the universality of Paul's soteriology, the complete consummation of the work of redemption revealed to John, and the entire lack throughout the entire Bible of any positive assurance of a term to probation at the boundary line of physical death; a doctrine which if it were true should have furnished the main burden of warning in the Scriptures, as it did in the preach-

ing of the preachers of my early earthly lifetime. 'But why should I argue with you only from exegesis?' I cried, all my heart going out to my unhappy prosecutors. 'Here are the present day facts even staring you in the face. Here are these three converts of a post-mortem gospel who assure you that they have lately experienced salvation. One hour of experience is said to be worth a thousand years of theory. I invite you each to make trial of the truth of my gospel even by here and now calling truly upon God for mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ. As theologians, deeply interested in spiritual themes, I desire to draw you into the vital realization of experimental religion. Intellectually you are none of you far from the kingdom of God. If you will not come to Christ now and be saved; what is there left for you but the bottomless hell of doubt thatched over with thin pretences; what but the narrowing hell of bigotry embittered by theologic hate; what but the seething hell of unrest and eternal disillusionment? Oh my brothers!' I cried 'come away from it all to Jesus Christ. He longs to save you from it still.' I had forgotten that I was on trial; my soul went forth to them. I waited, and even hell grew silent about us. I prayed without words, as I thought of the aeons still hanging upon their choice. I had known such moments on earth in dealing with men for the supreme decision, but here I had the intenser interest of watching

the innermost waver of each spirit about me, as the finger touch of each one's choice was poised ready to tip the balance for the right or for the wrong.

“As these keen minds hesitated, almost persuaded, the vision arose before me of a whole presbytery truly converted to God, and transformed into a power to win other souls to Him. Could not He answer prayer for these dignified ecclesiastics of the inferno as I had once seen it answered in the lump for the degraded inmates of a terrestrial house of correction? Alas! this was not to be as yet. I became cognizant of a movement in different individuals of that silent body.

“It was Nathaniel's old friend, Rorer, hastily putting forward some proposition to those who had been my most determined prosecutors. One of them claimed the ear of the presbytery, and in dryest manner moved that the examination of the accused be suspended at this point and that the presbytery be by itself. Mr. McCracken informed me that I could withdraw in his company, and I therefore yielded myself to his guardianship. While we were without, I was conscious that the greater part of my companion was absent in the secret session; but I refrained myself from endeavoring to penetrate its reserve.

“I thought of Jesus, my Master, yielding Himself to the flimsy bonds and puny guarding of Roman soldiers when He stood before Pilate and

before Herod voluntarily emptying Himself of omnipotence. I resisted the longing to be out of it all and to be wholly in heaven during the moments of eternity taken up by this infernal presbytery in deciding my case. These moments were prolonged until it became evident even to painfulness that presbytery was having difficulty in knowing its own mind. The part of McCracken which remained with me experienced apparent preoccupation in maintaining coherent conversation. But presently an expression of relief came over him and in another moment all of him was there present, assuring me that presbytery wished me to return and receive its unanimous decision.

“When I returned to them,” Father said, “all the members of the presbytery looked precisely alike as it were for the thickness of one inch below the surface of their souls; but further within they were each of a diverse color, which showed through in spots. The clerk pronounced upon me their sentence, which was that whereas I had maintained the doctrine of a probation for lost souls after death, a doctrine opposed to the teachings of the Westminster Standards, witness the Confession of Faith, chapter XXXII, Section I, taken with Larger Catechism Question 89 and answer: and whereas I had used language and made an appeal upon the floor of this presbytery which clearly betrayed my belief that this presbytery itself is sitting in hell, and in need of immediate repentance; and whereas I had thus shown

myself to be entirely out of harmony with the Presbyterian system in general, and with this presbytery in particular; therefore presbytery hereby *first* solemnly abjured and commanded me to recant and renounce the two aforesaid unsound, heretical and subversive beliefs, and to refrain hereafter from teaching or promulgating them in any manner or at any time; otherwise, should I declare myself unwilling thus to carry out my ordination vows to study the peace, unity, and purity of the church, and to yield to my brethren all subjection and obedience in the Lord; then *second* presbytery must find itself sorrowfully compelled to dissolve the pastoral relation existing between me and the church of Jeroboam's Holl, to depose me from the ministerial office, and finally to abscind, cut off, and excommunicate me from its membership, and from membership in the whole Presbyterian assembly of the Intermediate State.

“Hereupon the question was solemnly put to me whether I was willing to renounce my errors, and to refrain from setting them forth in future. To this I replied denying the first charge, while courteously and affectionately admitting the second. Referring in particular to the passages in the Confession of Faith and in the Larger Catechism quoted against me, I replied that I could heartily and unreservedly accept the doctrines set forth therein; if they could but allow me to take the words ‘forever’ and ‘reserved’

contained therein in the strict signification of the Greek words for which they stood in the King James translation of the New Testament. I believed that those dying impenitent were 'held' for judgment as every impenitent soul everywhere is held, and that in judgment they are sentenced to the pains of hell 'unto the aeons'; a sentence itself ever subject to reprieve. This possible reprieve I had been compelled to believe in by my actual and startling eye-witnessing of this reprieve being granted, even within a short time past, to one and another so held under hell's chains and darkness. Also this reprieve and full and tender pardon, I assured them was now offered and extended to them, my fellow presbyters, who were in some respects, however regretfully I must say it, the chief of sinners, having sinned against the clearest light.

"At this point Doctor Raxton, my chief accuser, interrupted me, and sternly declared that I was continuing to do precisely what presbytery had but just now abjured and debarred me from doing; namely, proclaiming heresy and appealing in a way derogatory to the piety and Christian character of the members of presbytery itself. Therefore he called at once for the formal pronouncement of presbytery's alternative sentence upon me.

"At this there were murmurs of dissent on every side, cries of 'No! No! Let him speak!' also motions to reconsider the former decision of

presbytery, which were declared out of order, contended over, put and voted down. These were accompanied with changes of color in a number of souls which showed a wavering toward the acceptance of Christ's mercy in its reality. Then in the midst of these agitations came the strident tones of the moderator pronouncing upon me the triple sentence decreed. While this was going forward, the congregation of onlookers upon the proceedings of the presbytery had been swelling, until it seemed as though an appreciable portion of hell itself was swarming in curiosity about us. Then, even as the last words of condemnation and exclusion fell upon me, I was made aware of a sobbing creature clinging, as it were, to my feet. It was Spindler, who had pressed his way into the presbytery, and now clove to me, beseeching me not to leave him behind, if I must take my departure. 'Oh, pray for me,' he cried; 'if you think, peradventure, prayer can possibly be answered for a thing like me.' I inquired of him if he was determined to be entirely true, by God's help, to the pure friendship of his three Christian wives in heaven.

"He answered, 'If they can ever bear to look at me again; I will not ask ever to look at any other women.' Then I prayed for him, even while Presbytery and hell around stood agape; and Albert here and my two mission converts joined our circle of prayer, Spindler also himself praying humbly, even as I had often heard him

pray on earth — yet with a new note of honest dealing with God and duty — and then and there, while we thus prayed, we were lifted and floated out and away from that assembly, in spite of its tendrils of interest clinging like long sea-weed about us; until we found ourselves, we five alone, amid the stars; yet not alone, for the embrace of our all forgiving God encircled us and drew us unto Himself."

CHAPTER X

While Father was thus making progress backward searching for Harry, his first-born, among the churches of Gehenna, Jeanie and I were having an exciting time in our enterprise with its civic orders. Wilkinson said, "I calculate we might as well begin with old Mystery!" "Why yes," Jeanie concurred, "if it was wheels that poor Harry was fond of, I could hardly imagine where he could find more of them, wheels within wheels, than in Free-Masonry, for all I have ever seen and heard."

"Which of them are here?" I asked Wilkinson softly, dreading the answer. "Perhaps you could guess," was his reply. "I would almost rather not," I said, "I would not wrong one of my old neighbours or parishioners of Tiptleton; yet I have missed so many of them from heaven."

"Just begin at the top of the list and come down" Wilkinson suggested.

"It always seems to us," Jeanie said, "that your grand mogul of all was McGammon; the one you usually spoke of in your weekly letters to the Independent as 'the genial proprietor of the Wessex House.' He sent so many poor fellows from his bar-room to this place, and then officiated as pall-bearer with so much dignity at each of their funerals; it would seem a pity for him not

to have come here to render them further service — at least for a time.”

“McGammon might be of great help to us in the search for Harry,” I mused; “he seemed, by his own account, to be such a great man in his relations with Free-Masonry throughout our state of New Jersey. Then there was my church trustee and member, Willoughby, one of McGammon’s faithful visitors — poor fellow! he too seemed to have a great deal to do with grand lodges and conclaves.”

“Well they are both here all right,” Wilkinson affirmed.

“Then there was Uncle Linas Godson, ‘pickled in whisky,’” Jeanie reflected, “and old Ezekiel Carter and the hotel keeper who played poker with him, and our elder Smiley, and Sigsbee the undertaker, who had such grand, open-handed ways and rarely missed coming to church, and Wilkins who owned so much of the town, including both the churches (as he good-naturedly thought) and Mayor Blake and those well-to-do ex-hotel keepers, and Dr. Madding, and the Honorable Mr. Wilson, the merchants, the town sergeant, the station master, the barber, the wheel-right, the miller, the quarry bosses, and — and —”

“And the Methodist minister,” I suggested.

“Dominie Weems never came this way” Wilkinson protested hastily; “for all that a lot of the rest of them did.”

"No nor my friend Howe, the hardware man; nor farmer Spelman, nor John P. and several others of the agriculturists who were in the lodge," I admitted. "All these I have met safe in heaven — one or two of them, perhaps, 'so as by fire.'"

"I wonder how any of them escaped such a maelstrom," Jeanie declared.

"Alas, I did not plead with these men as I should" I confessed. "I would meet them smilingly often, while inwardly I groaned and shuddered over the awful jeopardy they were in."

"I do not think you have any cause to reproach yourself," Jeanie protested stoutly. "If any modern minister ever set the judgment plainly before people, it was you."

"No Dominie, don't you grieve about that," Wilkinson said. "The warnings you did give us, and the way you talked and plead with us we would joke about in the lodge room. What could you do with us man by man, when we all held each other just so, onto the wrong way, under oath and secrecy, and the awful dread that the other men would laugh, or turn against you."

"It is kind of you both to exonerate me," I said. "For all that I know, and God knows that I was never quite faithful with these men. I stood all but paralyzed before the force of a community life liberal to the churches, patronizing toward the ministers of Jesus Christ; yet organized or controlled, with individual excep-

tions, in serenest contempt for the law of right."

"Isn't it strange that none of these people come around?" Jeanie remarked, clinging to me somewhat nervously. "Why, in heaven if we talked this long about people, they would some of them certainly appear."

"I guess I'll have to tell you," said Wilkinson hesitatingly; "you must try not to feel uncomfortable about it; but they are all around you now, only you can't see them. They've been coming ever since you spoke of the Noble Grand Master McGammon. They've heard everything you said. The lodge is sitting in the third degree, and you can't get at them without the passwords."

When I could control that creepy feeling, I said to Wilkinson, even sternly, "I wish to meet these men; get them to go into open session, or give me the password."

Something like laughter below the gamut grated in imperceptible vibrations on the air of hell. Wilkinson's soul turned pale. "If I were you, I would withdraw and take my wife away," he said.

"Withdraw from what?" I asked. "How can we withdraw from a presence which we cannot detect? Which way could we go, and know certainly that our steps were not being dogged?"

"Go back to heaven as quick as you can," Wilkinson counselled; "never mind about me; I'll come through somehow."

Jeanie laughed outright. "This is so deliciously like Tippleton," she said. "Surely some of them must be near indeed."

"But you don't realize how much you are in our power here," Wilkinson persisted. "Hardly so much so as in Tippleton," I protested; "except for the true souls who dared to stand with us there. Tell me what they are plotting."

"They're only considering," Wilkinson explained, "and if they should go on and vote on your case, no power in hell could save you. I'm taking a big risk only to tell you this much."

"Philip Wilkinson," I cried, "put your whole trust in God! Then I sang lustily,

"The soul that to Jesus has fled for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes.
That soul though all hell should endeavor to
shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"

"Now," I said, "get some of your lodge members outside of this unholy curtain of secrecy. I wish to talk to them, as I never quite braced up to talk with one of them on earth."

"Hush!" said Wilkinson. "They are just moving to send Squire Willoughby out to talk with you."

"Well, Dominie," Willoughby said, when I could distinguish him (Jeanie had not yet quite regained her sight for hell's own people), "you are here at last, are you?"

"Yes, Mr. Willoughby," I replied as calmly as possible, "I'm after you."

"And I'm after you, Dominie," he rejoined in a somewhat embarrassed manner. "Do you remember the first time you came to see me in Tippleton and how I offered to fill out an application for you to join the Masons?"

"Yes, you said it was against the rules of Free Masonry to approach any outsider in this manner, but you thought my case exceptional. I thanked you for the honor you did me, and told you I feared I could not accept it, but would take it into consideration for two weeks."

"Yes, and do you remember what you said when you saw me again about it?"

"Yes. I said I did not feel sure but that I might be mentally incapacitated for being a Mason; and that was where I lost your friendship, and where I made one of the many mistakes of my life, in a worldly point of view. I was often sorry that I did not express myself more clearly, and am to this day. I often wished for a chance to explain, but you never seemed to give me one. I have no reason to doubt that the essential principles of Free Masonry were above reproach."

"Well, what did you mean by it, anyhow?"

"Why have you never asked me before?"

"I was too mad. I thought you were making fun of me and casting contempt upon the order."

"So after being angry with me for a hundred and fifty years, you think it is time to ask for

an explanation! And I tried so hard to win back your friendship after that!"

"Well, what did you mean? I want to know, and the lodge wants to know, for they have sent me out to give you one more chance."

"My dear Squire Willoughby," I explained, "after you made me the first offer I went home and wrote to an uncle, a Knight Templar of Churchville, D. C. This is what I wrote:

" 'DEAR UNCLE ADOLPHUS:

" 'For the second time in my life, I am very kindly approached to become a Mason. I wish to have your straightforward, categorical answer to one question. Can a man be a practical Free Mason, and in conscience and the right of private judgment in dealing with his fellowmen, be entirely a free man? I ask you this question because I have seen some things in life, and Masonic friends have happened to tell me some other things which lead me to doubt about it. I am open to conviction, but needing to be convinced. Please advise me plainly, as one who wishes to be honest, and who believes uncompromisingly everywhere and always in the square deal between man and man, what I am to do about joining. With love for Aunt Eliza and the young folks, I am, as as ever, your affectionate nephew. ' "

"And how did he reply?" Willoughby asked.

"He wrote:

“ ‘MY DEAR NATHANIEL:

“ ‘I am interested to observe that you are still of an inquiring mind. When you were but five years old, you possessed the ability of asking more questions in five minutes than a man could answer in an hour. My advice to you is to join the Masons, now that you have another chance. Perhaps you may retrieve somewhat the apparent lack of inability to take the world by the handle and get on, which has so painfully manifested itself in your course in life hitherto. Do not stand shivering on the brink, but take the plunge. Free Masonry is great and complex. Life also is full of complexities. The principles of our great order will be gradually unfolded to you as you advance from degree to degree. Do not be continually straining at gnats for fear of swallowing some camel. The age we live in is one of action, rather than of sickly reflection. We take things as they are handed to us, and use them as we see other people using them for all we can get out of them. Life is too short, its opportunities too brief, to spend half our time splitting hairs about small scruples. There are always too sides to every question, even those that we call moral ones. You ask for my advice; that is remarkable; advice is something you have rather scorned hitherto; but since you desire it this time, take it, and cultivate hereafter a less serious way of regarding yourself and your ideals; get into the current of the world's success-

ful methods, and swim with it for all you are worth. With kindest regards for yourself and for Jeanie, I am, as ever, your affectionate uncle.'

"This was his letter, so the next time I saw you I told you that I did not feel quite sure but that I might be mentally incapacitated for joining your order. It seemed to me that I had the authority of Uncle Adolphus for the hesitation, although I still had my doubts whether the inside conception which Uncle Adolphus apparently had formed of Free Masonry was, after all, the true conception. How could I reconcile such a fear with the character of all the noble-minded Free Masons I had known and learned to love?"

"I regret you still have these prejudices," Willoughby answered, "for I am sent by Mystery Lodge to invite you to join. This is your second and last chance."

There was a veiled threat in his tone which caught Jeanie's attention. "Nat, who are you talking with?" she asked; "and what does he say about joining something?"

"It is Mr. Willoughby, who was one of our trustees in Tiptleton," I answered. Then I tried to produce a clearer medium of sympathy through which she might discern him. "You remember," I said, "how you went with me once or twice to call on him in his great interesting old house and to sing for him by the piano which had not been used since his daughter died."

She saw him now. "Oh, Mr. Willoughby, how you have changed!" she cried pityingly.

Willoughby had been one of those aging men whose nose and chin appear to approach each other with the passage of years. The process seemed to have continued with the physiognomy of his soul throughout the more than one hundred years of his stay in hell. A shell or beak enclosed him, which barely opened to emit a thought. Now, as Jeanie spoke to him, his reserve relaxed and his beak expanded. "I remember the first time you came," he said. "It was when I had the spell of rheumatic fever."

"And you told us so much about your wife and daughter," Jeanie said eagerly. "And my husband prayed with you and asked you if you did not long to meet them in heaven."

"There they are waiting for you yet, Mr. Willoughby," I cried, seizing her cue.

"And oh, Mr. Willoughby!" cried Jeanie, "wouldn't you rather be with them than here with all these ex-rum-sellers, poker-players and other godless lodge members?"

Willoughby trembled. "Have you really been with them?" he asked.

Jeanie told him some things Mrs. Willoughby and the daughter had mentioned to her in heaven about happy days when Mr. Willoughby joined the church and went with them so faithfully, until McGammon came and bought the Wessex House and took a pew in church, got hold of him at the

lodge, and drew him back to the old life. "They are praying for you yet," Jeanie said. "You look so old, and tired, and lonely! Won't you come away to them with us?"

Willoughby's whole aspect softened. "If ever a man loved his wife," he began, and then his manner grew troubled. "They are calling me back into the lodge," he said; "we will talk about this another time."

"Don't you go, Squire," Wilkinson urged. "Let's all four cut out of here forever."

"You see, Squire," I added, "this thing you belong to is not really Free Masonry any longer. When I was a boy, Masons did not permit liquor sellers to join their order. It is just as I tried to tell you once in Tiptleton; if you let this business into a lodge, by hook or by crook it will control the lodge and use the lodge for its own ends. It is the same way with a church. It is suicidal for any church to rent a pew to a rum-seller. Have I not read in the county papers of banquets held by your lodges at hotels, with an itemized description of the wines served, and the names published of my brother ministers who were Free Masons, and who were there to say grace, or otherwise sanctify the occasion by their prominent part in it? No doubt they thought they were winning men, but they were really underestimating the intelligence of Satan. The devil is no true Mason and there's nothing free about your Masonry with him in the lodge. If

you want to find real freedom and fraternity, cry to God for enfranchisement from sin, and come away to the brotherhood of the saints in glory."

"Let me go and see what they want," Willoughby urged; "maybe I can get them all to come and listen to what you have to say."

"That would be fine," I admitted, "but I have my misgivings. I would rather hold you. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

"Oh, don't go back in there," Jeanie pleaded. "They will just keep you from ever coming out again."

"Better cut the whole hell crowd, I say," Wilkinson put in, manfully.

"What's the Dominie doing in hell, then, I'd like to know?" was Willoughby's answer — "with his wife, too."

"I'm here on the same errand as when I came to the barroom of the Wessex House those Saturday nights with my Bible in hand to read and pray," I answered.

"Entirely out of place, it was," Willoughby said. "I never came to hear you preach after that."

"That was because you were mad to think the Dominie found you there," Wilkinson explained. "Your conscience began to work. I know, because I felt the same way."

"But when he got through praying for us and went out," Willoughby said, "why, we all had to take a drink to steady our nerves, and we said,

‘Why don’t he keep his religion out of here?’”

“I felt strange enough,” I admitted. “I knew there were hardly three men in the town who would approve; but I just couldn’t stand it any longer. And that’s why I am here. Such religion as I have, I cannot keep it out of hell. I did not go into the barrooms to spy on you; I would much rather not have seen who was there. I wanted to pray for your perishing souls. I couldn’t stay away, and get you out of my mind. Neither can I now. Oh, Willoughy! I want to see you a truly saved man. You are not wrong-headed, but you are weak. I dread to have you go back among your fellow lodge members, until I have seen you call on God for mercy and help.”

“Suppose you let me go in with him,” Wilkinson suggested. “I will see what I can do with the others, and anyhow, I’ll stay by him and bring him out safe, if it can be done.”

We had our anxieties for Wilkinson also, Jeanie and I; but we could not hold them back, and we longed to get at the others; so we let them go in, promising to pray for them every moment. There was a blare of sound, as if a thick door had opened where oaths and laughter mingled, and then silence, and we were alone in hell.

CHAPTER XI

Whether it was a half hour or a week we waited, it was hard to tell. No one molested us, but the suspense grew worse than struggle.

"Do you think they have put Mr. Wilkinson in their dungeon?" Jeanie asked, recalling stories of earthly lodge rooms.

"God keep him from the worser fate!" I cried in deep concern.

"Any way, it's nice and quiet for once in hell," Jeanie murmured. "We can pray for Mr. Wilkinson, and isn't it just lovely that we can be together in this vast silence? Aren't you glad now that I came, dear Boy?"

"Glad for myself, but anxious for you, dear," I replied, drawing her close. Indeed, I did not like to tell her how bodeful the solitude seemed. It gave rather a sinister demonstration of the force which could be exerted in hell by the august organization with which we were presuming to deal.

"Never mind, dear Boy," Jeanie said reassuringly; "we are safe and happy, with God and each other."

"But we are not making headway with God's task," I objected.

"I believe we ought to pray for God to save Mr. McGammon," Jeanie proposed. "It looks

as if he still has the whole bunch on a string. Perhaps we can pull him out, if we pray earnestly enough."

So we set to work. It may have been a fortnight or three weeks that we prayed, by turns or in concert. We told God all the kind things we could think of about the subject of our petitions; how faithful he used to be in coming to church after the strain of the terrible Saturday nights in his barroom, and in spite of the hard things the preacher was sometimes betrayed into saying — all through the first happy year of our pastorate at Tiptleton and up to the time the pews were voted free; how kind his wife was to send us chickens all dressed; how often he would urge us to use his carriage; how we would hear of their charitable activities in collecting old clothing for the poor children of Frank Johnson and others of their all-too-steady customers, and also of their prominent helpfulness on funeral occasions. We pleaded for what McGammon might be, under grace, as a leader of men, and for what he could possibly do with the so-called Free Masons of perdition. We rolled upon God's thought the awful havoc of leaving such a man longer exercising his lieutenancy for Satan. We appealed for a miracle of redeeming power to be exercised upon one whose conversion would make saints and angels stand agape. We besought for mercy for the chief, because the most unacknowledging, of

sinner, and prayed that prevenient grace might soften his proud, hard heart, and bring even him to repentance.

We were too busy to notice any time-makers of the stellar universe. I suppose it might have been about the middle of the second week that we felt something begin to pull. We redoubled our entreaties at the throne of grace. It was slow work, like twisting a hedgehog out of his hole with a forked stick. But we found ourselves really growing to love the man's soul, as we prayed for him, and that gave us conscious increase of power to pull. It was evident that there was a struggle at the other end. More and more tense grew our longing for this man's salvation. We prayed in gasps for sustaining power to pray, clinging to each other lest we should be fairly torn asunder, clinging to God and to God's promise of salvation unto the uttermost. At length, when we were all but bowed to the floor of hell, there was suddenly an explosion. The scroll of inviolate secrecy cracked asunder, and McGammon himself stood before us. We had never in our mortal acquaintance seen him in any way visibly perturbed, not even when I preached Ensign Dexter's funeral, after his last spree, from "It remaineth to man once to die, and after that the judgment" (Hebrews ix. 27), and endeavored to disclose before his pall bearers and others assembled there the dispassionate inquest God must hold over each man's life and death, to lo-

cate the blame for it all, and to determine if he were more sinned against or sinning. But now our old acquaintance came to us purple all over below the gray. I found myself embarrassed and disturbed in his sudden presence, to the point of hardly knowing how to address him. But Jeanie broke the pause quite naturally, exclaiming, "Why, Mr. McGammon! you are just the man we wish to see. It was very kind of you to come." So his composure was reëstablished, and he asked us with much of his old-time dignity what he could do for us now.

"We wish you first to surrender your whole soul to God," I answered stoutly.

McGammon did not answer at once. It was his way to give you a moment of silence in which to wonder if you had really addressed him as his worth demanded. "Reverend Sir," he answered at length, "what would you have me do second?"

"Whatever you felt most like doing," I answered. "When you have once given yourself to God, you will wish to do the right thing, and nothing else."

"When did I ever do anything else but the right thing?" he demanded.

There was no use in mincing words with him, so I answered: "It is the motive that makes an action right or wrong. The whole motive of your life during the short time I knew you seemed opposed to God."

"And you can never be happy in that way,"

Jeanie assured him. "I never pitied any one in Tippleton so much as I pitied you. Won't you give it all up now?"

"Madam and Reverend Sir," McGammon answered hastily, "I must ask you to excuse me from further conversation; I am called for elsewhere."

While I hesitated, Jeanie said, "If you leave us, we will go to praying for you again."

McGammon turned more grey, and remained.

"We are concerned for your soul, McGammon," I said; "we never prayed for you before as we have been praying this time. I feel that I sinned against you in Tippleton in despairing of your salvation. I did not try hard enough to get into your world and to intersphere with you, and understand, and sympathize. I am sorry, and I do so wish to make up for that now. Probably in your situation I would have been drawn into your line of business. Then certainly I would have endeavored to intrench and reinforce myself just as you did, only without your consummate address in doing so. I am so sorry that I did not do better by you. I am only more glad that I can tell that I have this opportunity to speak to you again. Heaven would be one long regret, if I could not get to make up in this way for my failures on earth. Now won't you listen to us while we try to make it plain to you that there is still a plan of salvation which embraces you? You have not now, as you doubtless once thought,

your bread to make in the service of Satan. What should hold you from breaking away from his hard thralldom altogether, and becoming a free man in Christ Jesus?"

"What but the same wicked grasp for power over others!" Jeanie exclaimed aside to me.

"Reverend Prester," McGammon answered with apparent frankness, "I appreciate your interest. You are faithful in your endeavors to exercise the duties of your office. I always said you were. I was never so much opposed to you, as you were to me. I wish to say again, as I have said before, that I have a very great respect for sincere religion. I am not so far from a Christian life as you may think. No man can be a consistent Mason without the cultivation of virtue. Your manner of address, Reverend Sir, is, from your standpoint, such as I should expect. I should think strange of you if you did not, upon suitable occasions, broach the subject of religion in your conversation with those with whom you are thrown. And now, will you not inform me how I can serve you; for there is a more urgent demand for my presence elsewhere?"

"What have you done with Mr. Wilkinson?" demanded Jeanie, "and Mr. Willoughby?"

"Done?" exclaimed McGammon. "I have not done anything with these gentlemen. They are both where they wish to be."

"That seems strange," Jeanie said. "They both promised to come back to us."

"They must have forgotten," said McGammon. "I regret, Madam, that your sex prevents me from showing them to you as I see them at this moment enjoying the sacred seclusion of their conclave, happy in the uninterrupted conversation of their fellows."

"How can that be?" I wondered. "How can any one enjoy or be happy in hell?"

"I am sure I have often thought it about Mr. Wilkinson and Elder Smiley and some other men," Jeanie declared, "that they could be happy almost anywhere where there was unlimited opportunity for talking."

"But Wilkinson;" I exclaimed. "He has so lately experienced conversion!"

"Allow me to detain you a few moments," McGammon said. "I think I may be able to give you a glimpse."

He seemed to be making some signal or other. Presently it was as if a curtain slipped aside; and there all around us a great lodge came into view, seemingly having an intermission in its ritual. I would not like to say how many were recognized among the throng. But there, alas! truly enough, was Wilkinson, the center of an appreciative group, discoursing with more than his old-time expansiveness on some subject of which we could not catch a syllable. Indeed, the whole scene was in pantomime, so that no precious secret was imparted to us. A moment more and the vision faded. Then Jeanie and I looked upon

one another, she with the expression a woman has when she is about to say, "I told you so!" only for sorrow we both exclaimed simultaneously, "Backslidden!"

"Does this satisfy you, respected friends?" McGammon asked. "Or is there any other acquaintance about whom you would desire to acquire information?"

I was somewhat crestfallen, I fear, in answering. I explained that our primary object was the search for my brother; as to whose moral whereabouts we had no clue, any more than we had had through his whole earthly life; but that Wilkinson had kindly engaged to pilot us here and there among the civic orders of this outer world, to aid us in making inquiries for him. While searching for him, I explained that I trusted at least to find some other brothers of men, and, by God's grace, to take them with me back to heaven.

McGammon seemed concerned in thought for us for some moments, and then he made a proposal which did not appeal to us both alike. "Your sex, Mrs. Prester," he said, "will preclude you from such intimate acquaintance with Free Masons and Free Masonry, as I can by the extreme courtesy, accord your husband. Could you not possibly find congenial female friends among whom you could await his return, with no possible danger of experiences trying to feminine delicacy? — with no reflection, sir, intended upon any one. If you could accompany me alone,

Reverend Sir, I can put the whole range of my acquaintance with Free Masonry and members of lesser orders at your service in the search for your brother."

I felt grateful for such an offer from one whom I had opposed in former days. It even seemed to show traces of an incipient Christian spirit of forgiveness, and reassured my new ideal of converting a most influential reprobate. So I was disposed to accept the offer, especially as it gave me a pretext for getting Jeanie safe and pleasantly back into heaven. But to her mind the proposition bore a sinister aspect. "This man always could set any kind of a trap," she said, "and you could be safely counted on to walk right into it."

"Sometimes that is the directest way to smash them," I answered. "But this time he offers the only way I can see to get at Wilkinson and Wiloughby and, possibly, Harry Prester."

"And what will become of poor me, all the time you are gone?" she asked wistfully.

"Darling," I answered, "it is not my will to be separated from you. It has so often been like this when I have had to go anywhere without you! I am sure you would not wish to make me ridiculous before all these men inside."

"Oh, my dear Boy," she said piteously. "I have a woman's nature; I cannot help but tremble for you. There is just one of you, and they are

so many! This experience with Wilkinson shows how much you can depend on any of them."

"Hell is God's world, too, my darling," I murmured.

"But I need you so, dear Boy, and I was so proud to think I could go with you!"

"And I need you, my darling," I answered. "My heart grows heavy almost as though I were starting off on a candidating trip, to think of going without you. But then, your more than three hundred descendants in heaven all need you. Won't you go straight to them, dear, and wait for me there? I will come to you there, as soon as I get through with these lodges. That will be the very next thing. Pray that I may bring many with me."

"Oh, dear Boy, I cannot," said Jeanie. "Go on inside if you must, and let me wait for you here."

"You will have to leave me first, my darling," I answered. "I cannot leave you — alone in hell!"

While we were conversing with one another, McGammon was showing signs of growing impatience, and swelling to monstrous size with offended importance. At last Jeanie gave me a trembling caress, and glowed away from hell. Her position did not change by the bearings of the stars. Her form just lost its outline in a blurr of light so glorious as to be painful to our

gaze from the murky atmosphere. To the last of my power to look, her soul glowed toward mine with ineffable love, and her last thought-message was a prayer that God would keep me and bless me. I turned to McGammon — the man I had never seen moved on earth — hoping to find him trembling, too, with sacred feeling. He had shrunk by one-half; yet he could speak without apparent emotion, and asked me if I were ready to enter an arcanum which had no gates opening outward.

“I am ready,” I answered, “to go where God wills.”

CHAPTER XII

Naturally, my first desire was to talk with Wilkinson. At close range within the conclave, the mystery of his apostacy was solved in part. I found there were really two of him now: an outside Wilkinson, talkative almost to feverishness; and there inside a sorrowful, dumb, abjectly heartbroken creature, trying to hide away entirely within its companion. My conversation was partly with one, partly with the other. The first recognized me casually with a modulated surprise.

"Dominie Prester of all men!" he exclaimed. "At last have you become a Mason!"

"I always longed to be one," I answered, "if only that by all means I could save some of you men."

The outer Wilkinson took a careful observation of the immediate neighborhood, to ascertain that no one of the great lodge was interested in the conversation; then the inner Wilkinson peeped through, and asked plaintively:

"Did you really venture all this just to follow me up?"

"It was either follow you up, or give you up," I answered, "and I could not bear to do that."

"Dominie, you don't know what this means," both Wilkinsons exclaimed at once. "You can never get out of this again!"

A sinister shadow flitted over my spirit at his words, like that cast by some passing bird of prey. Then I took the sudden suggestion more rationally, and answered that I could not believe anything so strange. "I took no obligation in entering your order," I said. "It was McGammon's proposal, and he made no condition. I am only here as a visitor looking for my brother — and all my other brothers. When I have fulfilled God's mission here, God will recall me, and what can separate us from His love?"

"You do not know the power with which you are dealing," the inner Wilkinson answered fur-tively. "Here I am caught, chained, helpless. I can never see heaven or mother now. And I saw our Worshipful Grand cast the same spell over you as you entered. Oh, I tried to warn you! You are only in the first degree: you can see only the least part of what is done and plotted around you; but can't you feel it? Don't something tell you you are in a trap?"

"I have had sensations, I suppose, something like those of a deep sea diver, ever since I came into hell," I answered. "Now I simply feel that I have gone a little deeper. I have no right to call it a trap when McGammon warned me that there were no doors opening outward."

"Then you really agreed to let him shut you in," Wilkinson exclaimed, "and you have already seen things in our Free Masonry of hell that no spirit could ever be allowed to get out and tell."

"That is his lookout," I replied; "he cannot shut me in, whatever he thinks; for I have with me the key which let Christian and Hopeful out of Doubting Castle."

"There isn't any lock to put your key in," Wilkinson contended. "McGammon told you right: there aren't any doors."

"Christ is the Door," I answered, "both inward and outward. He is beside me."

"Oh, Dominie!" the real Wilkinson wailed, "I thought it would be so before I came in this time; but I can't find him. Christ never came in here."

"But we have His promise, Philip," I urged. "Go ye into all the *kosmos* and preach the gospel to every created being," "and lo! I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age."

"Yes, Dominie, but not in a place like this. I can't feel Him in here. Try it yourself, Dominie. Can you even feel interested in anything outside of here now?"

Thus challenged to objectify my own emotions, I realized with a sudden misgiving that heaven and the outer hell itself had grown strangely far away. My mental images even of Jeanie and of Joy, of my mother and my children, of Father and Albert exploring hell's ecclesiastical world were all blurred and indistinct. Many years seemed to have elapsed since telling Jeanie good-bye. Not only was the intense longing dominant to talk with the former acquaintances whom I be-

gan to recognize at every glance about the blue, mysterious interior around me; but a creeping fascination possessed me to interpret the solemn and varied formalities which were transpiring in endless weary iteration. It was almost as though I had died a second time — a death that entailed contraction, as the former had brought expansion of life. The air seemed close and dead. The stars had grown dim, as if seen through imperfectly transparent walls, themselves invisible, because never stationary. The consciousness that there were walls, seamless, flexible, yet mercilessly inclusive, haunted me as a dreamy suspicion rather than as a demonstrable fact. A nameless, numb depression held me, and every effort seemed slower than a nightmare; but when I asked God still to make the waking glad, there came a thrill of joy, warming the center of my being with the exultation of an arctic campfire. I turned to my companion and said, "Brother, I can still love God."

"I still want to love Him, too," Wilkinson said. "I didn't go to turn my back on Him. Only, before I knew it, I was talking with the boys and they didn't any of them seem to see any change in me, and I was glad they didn't, and then when I thought about God, He wasn't there."

"God will come back to you when you are ready to confess Him," I said. "Oh, brother, let us brace up and show a bold front, we two, for our Master."

But as I spoke, the inner Wilkinson suddenly shrank from view, while the outer one blandly remarked in full tone, "You haven't noticed the signal, Dominie Prester. Three raps call the lodge to attention. Our chaplain is about to invoke the Satanic blessing."

I was astonished and shocked with what I saw and heard after that. When the various rignaroles were over, I exclaimed to Wilkinson, "This is a wicked travesty on Free Masonry. Neither Solomon nor Hiram would own it. The proper Free Masonry demanded a belief in God. It invoked His blessing alone. Its chaplains were men of such pious flavor as were available — like Elder Smiley and Parson Weems — not such as that reprobate yonder, who, if I recognize him aright, is no other than Uncle Linas Godson, a man who had the reputation, when beyond the presence of a minister, of never opening his mouth without profanity; and that past chaplain who read the responses in this awful Satanic liturgy, if I mistake not, is old Galpin himself, the man who might quite suitably have been hung in Churchville in 1890 for killing Alfred Hyson. In the name of Washington I protest that this is not Free Masonry at all, with all its seemly principles and worthy honor of Deity."

"Dominie, that was ceremony," replied the inner Wilkinson, peeping out a moment. "This is dead earnest."

"Incredible!" I exclaimed. "What possible

motive of reverence, affection, self-interest, *anything* real can a soul have in devil-worship?"

But the inner Wilkinson had shrunk from view. "Ask the chaplains, Dominie," replied the ostensible man, "they are watching you."

My question about them had probably drawn their attention. Both approached me.

"I suppose it is hardly necessary for me to introduce you to each other," I remarked by way of preface, wistful to sound about for common ground with them. "You each knew me on earth before you knew each other here. How — how do you like it here, anyway?"

"Godson can speak for himself," Galpin answered. "For my part I have found one world just about the same beastly botch of a thing as the other."

"The article I am most loth to dispense with is a drink of whiskey," Godson confessed. "Hell is most damned dry. I'm damned glad to see a G — d damned prohibitionist appearing here; no matter how you arrived here."

I will not mar one of heaven's story records by the repetition of his monotonous profanity. The listener, as this account unrolls, may understand, without caring to imagine, that all the speech of Uncle Linas was thus salted with hell salt. He has told me since giving himself to Christ of how he and his cronies would sometimes abandon themselves to blowing off an importunate cyclone of blasphemy, cursing God and each other and every

name of tender memory, until hell itself grew weary of the senseless tumult.

"If that is the most you miss," I said in reply, "it seems to me that you are better off in hell than you were on earth. I should think you would be glad to be shut away from the prime cause of your downfall."

"You have no data to know what it is to wish for a drink for a hundred years," he declared; "to fain be ready to sell your mother's soul for a drink, to rage for a drink, to howl for a drink, to search all hell even for a thimbleful, to scheme and plot and struggle and pray to Satan for a drink, and never get one drop distilled; to be sober for a whole century, and still wildly, madly disposed toward a spree at the end of it. I tell you I am inclined to think you interloping prohibitionists have had something to do with this, and now that we've caught you, if I cannot contrive to make you howl, it will be because Master McGammon and my Lord, the Devil, decline to help me. I would fain even gnaw on you until I get a drop of blood out of you by some means."

Galpin seemed no less vindictive than his colleague. "Get us a drink!" they both shouted at once. "You sniveling, ranting reformer, we'll make you find one in some way, and we'll make you drink it with us. Ha! ha! ha! that will be hell-justice roasted on a spit! Get us a drink, you meddler! We are dry: we are burning, scorching, parching, raging dry! And it is

partly your fault, we think, and the fault of such as you, and the fault of your God; your partial, cruel, narrow-minded, overbearing, bigoted, vindictive, arbitrary, cold-blooded tyrant-God. We hate Him; we hate you; we hate the universe you say He made; we hate everything but a drink, *a drink!* A DRINK!! Oh, get it quick!"

I endeavored to calm them. "Mr. Galpin," I said, "I remember one Sunday morning in Churchville when, as I was on my way from the Presbyterian Sunday School to the Congregational Church service, I met you just as I turned the corner by Lankin's store. You were walking straight on the inside plank that held the gravel sidewalk in place, but you must have just come out on the car from the city, for you were so drunk that there was no apparent focus in your sight; and when I spoke to you, you threw up your arm as if to ward off a blow, and passed on without a word. Would you really wish to be like that again? How glad you ought to be that God, in his infinite mercy, has confined you to hell's vast inebriate asylum, and to the disembodied existence which drink cannot curse! At last you have a chance to think, to repent, to pray!"

But they both screamed and roared simultaneously at me at once. "Think! We are mad with thinking! We want to get drunk! drunk! drunk! and stay drunk till eternity gets old. Pray! we do pray! We pray to Satan, the only

one that cares for us. It's pray or rave, with us. Oh, to get drunk and go to sleep!"

"That was what I wished to ask you about," I remarked. "Why do you pray to Satan? What is your conception of Satan, that you can pray to him? What good do you think he can do you? In what respect does he attract your homage? I can understand how you might pity Satan. I do, myself,—profoundly. You might possibly extend the principles of the Sermon on the Mount to the limit of loving him and of praying for him as the greatest enemy and hater of your souls; but how you can pray *to* him, and render him adoration, homage, total submission, even a certain inverted consecration, as I heard you doing a while ago in the use of your lodge ritual—that is what puzzles and bewilders me exceedingly."

"A man must pray to someone," Galpin answered sullenly. "God never did us a good turn. He never gave me half a chance. If you knew the man I had to work for when a boy, the man I had to call 'father.' And now God has damned us forever. What claim has He got on our worship? We hate Him. We've got a right to hate Him. Anyway, we've got nothing to lose by hating Him. Our state is fixed; our fate is settled; our doom is sealed. That's another strong argument we have for worshiping the Devil. We love him for the Enemy he has made. A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind. God is down on

the Devil and He's down on us. The preachers were down on us. The old ladies were down on us. God was down on us. So we are here, and there is nothing for us to do but to worship the one that runs things here. He can do anything that anybody can do for us. And if he couldn't do anything, we still have to have something to worship. There isn't a spirit in hell that hasn't got some sort of religion, if he'll only let on."

"I'm glad to hear you say this, Mr. Galpin," I acknowledged. "You used to talk so differently back in the other life. Do you remember one morning when we walked across the Aqueduct Bridge together between the trolley lines? I tried to lead you to Christ, and you told me religion was all well enough for people who were weak and couldn't do right without praying; but for your part, you had never done wrong in your life; you had always done just what you felt to be right. I didn't ask you in what way you thought it was right to kill Alf. Hyson because he asked you for the wages he had earned six weeks before, and cursed you when you refused to pay. I waived that point, and inquired if you didn't think we all needed the comfort of religion, the cheer and the strength that came from experiencing God's blessing on our life. And you replied that people might need it who were weak-kneed or chicken-hearted. So we separated to take different cars. Then the last time I remember seeing you on earth, you were in a blacksmith shop arguing

against Sabbath observance to a group of bystanders, from the analogy of nature, which keeps no Sabbath. I am sure I never heard of you being in a church, not even the little church we built at Slab Town on the lot you so kindly gave us from your wife's land."

"Yes, and I never would have let you have it," Galpin said, "except from a religious impulse. You preachers never would understand me. You and your father asked for the lot for the sake of the good the church would do the community in a humanitarian way, as if I cared anything about that! You ought to have talked just as though you took it for granted that I wanted to do something pious myself once in a while. We're all like that, and the stouter we talk against religion, the more it shows that we can't get religion out of our mind. There ain't one of us that can. Many and many a Sunday morning I listened to the sound of the bells coming over the hills from Churchville, and wondered what it was like to be brought up in Sunday School and to go and sit with your folks in church. Many a time I've gone back to listen to them since I reeled into hell, and I have peeped inside, and wished I could have been different while I was living. But that chance is all over now, and all the religion I have for eternity is the lodge ritual adapted to the god of this lower world."

I began to feel more drawn to Galpin than I

had ever been on earth. If men were going to open their thoughts to me thus in hell, there really seemed more hope of doing something for them than in all earth's pastoral endeavor. I turned eagerly to Godson, to see if he would follow Galpin's frank example. "How is it with you, Uncle Linas," I asked. "Yours cannot be Galpin's reason for forsaking God's worship; for I have heard that you were piously brought up and that your father was an elder in the church."

"Yes, he was one of the old kind; my father was an elder of the old stripe," Godson answered. "He and his father occupied a prominent pew in the meeting house, and he also kept the decanter always on the sideboard, the demijohn in the closet. My father could partake of a brandy cocktail, and then hie him away to sessional meeting, to lead in prayer and to quarrel with dignity. But strong drink from the beginning exercised a strangely opposite effect upon me. With the first quaff there would come into my being a singular spirit of depravity. I found myself impelled to swear, to gamble, to look for bad women. Yes, I came before the session and entered the full membership of the church as soon as I reached years of discretion and could repeat the catechism: my parents would have it so. I cannot assert that I ever experienced a change of heart, or ever had much said to me on the subject; but I was never averse to attending church in my youth; although rarely

sufficiently sober to do so in later life. I feel impelled to impart to you, Dominie, what I never acknowledged in your pastoral visits to my room in the old store; that I was accustomed to say my prayers night by night, whenever I slept alone and retained my reason sufficiently to be conscious of going to bed. I cannot declare that I ever meaningly said them to God; but I said them notwithstanding. And I felt the better satisfied with myself for the same after every carousal. But since I have descended, I do really pray to the one who has not cast me off forever."

"God has not cast you off forever, Brother," I protested. "It is Satan's deceit, exercised, I know, over many good minds, which has led you to believe this. Satan, just now, is playing upon a mistaken theological belief, conscientiously held and carefully impressed upon your mind by your religious teachers; in order to inflame your hatred against the God who still loves you and patiently seeks to save you."

"Loves me?" Godson cried: "God *loves me*? I would like well to hear one argument to prove that God still loves me, or forsooth that He ever did love me."

"Your continued existence proves it," I replied; "the pains God takes to maintain you in life, with all the matters He has on His mind."

"He does it to curse us," Galpin interjected. "Life! I tell you, sir, we are cursed with life."

If God loved us or pitied us, He would let us die and be nothing. Let me die: oh let me die! Oh my Devil! how often I have asked for that! But he answers that he himself would be glad to die; only the spite of God keeps him living on."

"That's another one of his lies," I answered. "It isn't God's spite but His patient love. Do you suppose God would not gladly have done with all of you? What possible motive, but a desire for your reformation, could cause God to keep on flowing and forcing His life into you through the constricted arteries of your decaying souls, to save you from the completed tragedy of a soul's decomposition? What is it in God's heart but pity and hope for you, and a shrinking from the bad smell your fate would leave in His universe forever?

"You give me a new motive to plot for suicide," Galpin answered. "Ha! ha! I never thought of that. I'll die just to spite God for ever making me like this. Ha! ha! ha! destroy myself utterly in vice, and leave God to think what a nice lump of corruption He left me free to make of myself! Ha! ha! ha! I'll die: I *will die*. Inch by inch I'll kill myself! Trait by trait I'll poison, I'll smother, I'll asphyxiate, I'll strangle, I'll mangle, I'll bleed to death, I'll emasculate, I'll infect with plague cultures every thing that lives within me until I am dead, *dead*, DEAD! so dead that God and all His angels can't resuscitate me forever."

“Poor puny, spoiled child!” I exclaimed. “Do you not know you cannot parse God as the subject of the verb ‘cannot?’ You may practise self-murder to the stretch of a million deaths, and God will rescue your identity from each verge of total extinction.”

Then I thought of poor Charlie Lovejoy dragged back to life after that awful dose of chloral which he took four months before he finally swallowed an ounce. I asked Godson if he had met him in hell. “I know he was not in good standing in Mystery lodge,” I said. “I suppose he was such a baleful example of the extreme effect of alcohol, that McGammon and his fellows rather frowned him down and out. But perhaps he may have been reinstated here.”

Lovejoy answered in person. “Did you wish light on the suicide mania?” he asked at once. “Yes, it clings to me yet. The hardest part of hell is that you cannot get out of it in that way.”

“Did you find no relief, then, in death?” I asked. “I have oftener wondered if even hell may not have brought partial relief to you. Wasn’t it good to get out of your poor poison-tortured body? And with your scientific turn, and your entire freedom from malice or uncharitableness toward any soul, with all the glories of God’s universe spread out before you, and myriads of worlds and suns waiting your interest; how could you fail to really make a good thing of it by

your voluntary change of residence from Tiptleton to hell?"

"It looked somewhat that way to me, at times, in anticipation," Lovejoy answered. "The fascination of suicide in my secret thoughts, I believe, had something to do with my course of dissipation from the time I began the practise of medicine in Tiptleton. Even as a boy, reciting 'Cato's Soliloquy,' the germ of the thing was in my mind. But I had everything lovely to live for, and I wonder sometimes if God did not bless me so far above the average of mankind, with means, with faculty, with favor, with opportunity, with devoted affection, doting parents, liberal education, admiring friends, a fond wife, beautiful children, fortune, popularity, enjoyment in living; in order to make the world He put me in as attractive to me as possible. But when I began to drink a little with the men I was thrown with in the lodge and in the church at Tiptleton, this fascination of the possible experiment of self-destruction began to develop within me. Handling my drugs I often repeated to myself Cato's apostrophe with regard to his sword and his roll of Plato.

" 'This in a moment brings me to my end:
But this informs me I shall never die.'

"And while drink was so quickly robbing me of everything but the devotion of my heart-broken wife and mother, I did not really care so

much for the whirl with which patrimony, practice, reputation, health, intellect, all went by the board; when just a little overdose of the drug with which I would brace up after a spree might strand the wreck of my wasted life upon the unseen shore, and open the wideness and the wonder of a new beginning in life. Hell had few terrors for me. When they sent me once and again to the Keeley Cure and to the State Reformatory, I never found any difficulty in winning the friendship and favoritism of my keepers. Hell could hold no fiend so grim, that I could not make a chum and a patron of him. When you came and prayed with me in the illness which followed my first attempt, I liked it; I was ready to agree to any pious suggestion you might make; I enjoyed all the tenderness and pity and wistfulness you all lavished on me; but in my inner heart I did not repent of the sin of intentional self-murder, and I did not resolutely put out of my thoughts the fancy of trying its supreme sensation, to see what the beyond was like. I am inclined to think that every confirmed drunkard, every abandoned man or woman has this fascination of the Niagara plunge in his or her mind, this luxury of power over his own life, to be or not to be. I had hardly known a wish or whim in all my life which had not been granted; I had followed every line of research and experiment which had appealed to me; I had indulged in whatever I found pleasant; why not in dying

as I chose? I did not really wish to inflict pain on those who loved me; but as matters had been going with me for some years past, I rather thought the relief of having it all over would weigh against any sorrow you all might experience over the way the end came. I knew you couldn't think hard of me, whatever I did. I never meant to be cruel: I never felt more drawn to you than on the afternoon when I crossed the street to chuck your little girl under the chin, as she sat in her go-cart. You remember I turned abruptly and started to go around the corner of Hotel Tippleton. You said so wistfully, 'Take care of yourself!' I answered 'Yes sir!' fingering the ounce of chloral in my left hand coat pocket. My wife has told you what a pleasant time we all had together that day. I had not touched a drop of liquor for more than a week. Oh, I never wished to be bad! I tried to keep straight and attend to practice after recovering from that first attempt. But what could a man do in Tippleton?"

"I blame myself that I did not put things more strenuously to you," I exclaimed. "Why did I not force my way within the curtains of your reserve, lay bare your sin to your own eyes, and warn you of the state into which you would surely come if you dared hurl yourself into eternity?"

"It would have done no good," Lovejoy answered. "I would simply have taken it as the

kind of talk you felt professionally called upon to give me. Other preachers had talked hell and judgment to me, or at me, and it never impressed me. It seemed to me that they were taught and supported, and expected to work thus upon the fears of people — principally women and small children. Their doctrine of hell did not appeal to me rationally. It reminded me of what Carlyle said about the bladder with some dried peas in it, shaken for a bug-a-boo. It seemed almost too extreme. The scareful in it seemed rather over-done. It appeared to hold up God as one thing in this world, and entirely the opposite thing in the next world, with nothing but the little accidental boundary line of dying between. It would have had more deterring power over me, if it hadn't threatened so much more than I could see was likely to happen. Anyway the preachers weren't somehow giving us very much of it of late. They left it out at funerals. They didn't make whole sermons of it anymore. Hell was only a passing allusion with them now-a-days. The pastors and Christian people didn't act as if they believed in it. They didn't go howling through the streets to warn people, as Finney said he'd do when he came to believe in hell. They didn't tell me in private that they were concerned for my soul. No, it wouldn't have done much good for you to have warned me. I had to come here to see what it was like."

“Then how could I have saved you” I asked. “How ought I to have talked to you? I wanted so much to know!”

“I wish I could tell you. Sometimes I think you might have set something a little bigger and harder before me in the way of getting converted and turning to Christ. If you had told me I must turn in and reform Tippleton; I might have been fired by that idea in the way of an experiment. It would have been so different from any I had ever tried. I wouldn’t reproach you, Parson. I guess you did your best for me, with all the other people you were trying to keep straight. God knows I have wished often enough somebody could have kept me from doing it.”

“Then you would have liked to be back in life and — in Tippleton?” I asked.

Expression failed him for a time. “Mister Prester,” he said at length, struggling with strong emotion, “I woke up in hell and found my soul. The marvels of the universe had little interest for me then: I said ‘I will see you later.’ Irresistibly I was drawn to the one spot where my own lifeless body lay upon the old couch in my office amid the worn and faded surroundings of our mortgaged home. I hovered over my wife and children sleeping. I saw all the heart-breaking time when they found my corpse and found the mawkish note I had written. If I had ever really thought that I was in danger of wearing out their love, and that they might be

better off without me; I was quickly disillusioned now. I would have given all the worlds I had thought to interest myself in just to be back and comfort them; to brace up and be a man and what a son, a husband, a father ought to be. I was with them every minute of those awful days; yet I could not speak, or touch one of them, or lighten one sad thought. I attended the funeral, and saw my once beautiful home full of weeping people who loved me in spite of my ill desert. I heard you trying to speak of how much more you and the rest of you might have done to help me. I was with you as you walked to the cemetery just up the hill, and as you all stood about my open grave, and even some who I had supposed might have a contempt for me were sobbing. I saw friends going back to the house with my chief mourners weeping even more than when they came. I knew all about my wife's struggles and the debts she payed off little by little, long after the home was gone. I was beside her many a midnight, after the children were all in bed and their clothes patched and darned, listening to her pray and cry to God, and many a time I have heard her say, 'Oh Father forgive me if it is wrong; but I must pray for my poor Charlie!' Do you think I have been enjoying myself in the wider universe? Do you think I have been calmly pursuing scientific investigation? Do you suppose I could content myself among the stars when there was my

mother down in her little bare room with her Bible on her lap, trying to find some light of cheer and comfort in the awful shadow I had brought over her life? She was dying by inches with a gentle heart-break, while she tried to the last to help Clara keep the children clothed and fed. I took in every detail of their life after she was gone, and when my wife followed her to heaven, worn out with over-work and sorrow, I could still catch sight of them sometimes and I tell you I have been like Dives in hell, coming to my soul and a man's true concern for the welfare of his own. Sometimes I can see Clara and mother still from afar off, and they look as if, in submission to God's will, they were still wishing for me."

"Why don't you go to them then?" I asked.

Charlie hesitated in replying just as he would have done in the former life. "You seem to be mocking me," he said at length. "Do you think I haven't tried to get to them? Like a snake in the zoo knocking its head against the glass, I have hurled myself again and again upon the invisible barrier which comes everywhere between us. It seems so strange, even in the spirit world, that I should be even so distantly cognizant of them; and yet I am unable to attract their attention. I can guess that they think of me; for at the times when I can discern them they seem to have drawn apart by themselves in heaven and to be comforting each other about

something. I have tried to forget them in vain, and I don't believe they have forgotten me. I have pursued science somewhat, as you thought, since coming here. I have forced my attention upon it, in hope of distraction of thought; but time and again my line of investigation and experiment has come around to this insistent problem — how to reach out even one finger, as it were, out of hell.

“I used to dabble somewhat in spiritualism, as you know, along with other things, in half-sober intervals on earth; but I have not been able to demonstrate it at all from this side the barrier. On every side I am caged and held in, even from self destruction. Oh how I have tried to destroy myself indeed! Suicide did not do it. I only plunged into a life that was wide-awake, quivering with intensity, quickened and broadened into a million-fold capacity for discontent. I have tried everywhere, every way for some means to stop thinking and to stop being. I find myself indestructible. Flaming suns will not burn me, oceans cannot drown me. Frozen planets have no power to numb me. Hell has no Lethe which will help me to forget. If I plunge into vice; it only scorches and nauseates me. I have tried to reach Nirvana by concentrating my mind on one thought, until by sheer monotony it should come to be almost the same as not thinking; just as one prolonged note of sound ceases at last to be audible. So I would focus my attention upon

some one hypnotic point for hours, days, or weeks, I know not how long; till some stray association of ideas would act like a lighted train of powder to a magazine, and remorse, longing, conjecture would explode into thousandfold activity within me. The fire-flood of sorrow would sweep back upon my soul, as it comes when one wakes from sleep. There have been times when I would try to put the length of hell between myself and the far vision of Clara and mother in Paradise. Then again the awful loneliness of it would drive me back to look, and wail, and call to them, and shake the bars of hell with my anguished struggle to get out to them. I assure you sir, there is no way out. Hell is one great trap, with valves opening only inward. All the dynamite of our rage cannot blow one little crack in our transparent prison walls, all the keenness of our cunning cannot pick its lock or solve its combination. There are so many ways in; but no way out, no way out! no way out!"

"Jesus says 'I am the way, the truth and the life,' " I suggested. "He says, 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me.' "

"Do you think Jesus would ever let me get back near them?" Lovejoy asked. "Are they not much better off never to know about me again?"

"It seems to me that you are nearer to them now in soul, Charlie!" I answered, "than you ever were on earth. On the whole I should say,

hell has been good for you, as it seems to have been for Dives. The one thing you need now is to find Christ in reality. He can still do for you to the limit of your faith in Him."

"Faith!" Lovejoy exclaimed tremblingly, "I am the man who has murdered faith. When I took my own life, I simply put God out of my world. I took my soul in my own hands and brought it here. God no longer has any responsibility for me; neither have I any shadow of a claim upon him."

"I am glad to hear you own it," I replied. "You are by so much nearer to depending entirely upon free grace, and nothing else can save you. You are thus nearer salvation than Galpin and Godson here. They each rather blame God for being here. They think He did not give them a fair chance on earth. They are inclined to feel resentful about it; and until they can honestly come to some different opinion, of course they can neither repent nor pray."

"I hardly know so well about Mr. Galpin," Lovejoy answered; "but Uncle Linas, you and I have been on many a drunk together, and you know as well as I that God never made us do like that. Think of the chances we had more than the heathen that never heard of Christ! We sat side by side in church in the pew of which we each rented half, and we might be sitting side by side in heavenly places now if we had cared."

"The preaching strangely failed to help me

stop the drinking," Godson said. "The one seemed in part to depend upon the other. The best pew rents came from the tavern keepers, and at such times as my father set out to circulate a subscription paper, he always went to these gentlemen to start it off. None thought the church could be run without the taverns, and it was also often argued that the taverns couldn't be run without bars, nor could the bars, we knew full well, be profitably run without steady drinkers. So it was that my father felt constrained to sign and indorse the annual applications for hotel license; and it seemed also fitting and incumbent upon us younger fellows, if we cared for the prosperity of the church, to drink often and freely at the tavern bars. It was the self-same drink which helped pay the preacher and which helped bring me to hell."

"But all that was changed after the Dominie Prester here came to Tippleton," Lovejoy suggested.

"To be sure," Godson admitted, "and at that we felt ourselves so agrieved, to behold the ways of our forefathers turned upside down, that we all but lost our affection for the church, even if at that late day, we could often have sobered up sufficiently to attend it."

"I cannot tell you how sorry I am," I confessed. "I tried to save you, and I only seemed to alienate you. Indeed I never felt hard toward any of you. I must freely own that had I been

brought up under the conditions of your life, or of Mr. Galpin's, I would probably have developed about as either one of you did, and would have landed exactly here, as you did; unless it had been by some most marvellous interposition of God's saving power."

"You seem to have landed here just the same," Galpin remarked grimly.

"I came by God's help to save you from hell," I answered.

"If God is interested to help anybody save us; He ought to have begun a ways further back," Galpin answered.

"My dear sir," I protested, "God was moving for your personal salvation untold ages before Adam and Eve sinned in Eden."

"Why didn't He move a little faster then, and accomplish it?" Galpin asked. "Why did He put everything against me?"

"And why do you ask questions in the past tense," I objected, "while eternity is still before? For pity's sake upon your own soul get your attention off the past. Perhaps you were under a spiritual disadvantage; perhaps even your oft-repeated rejection of God's offers of mercy, your stifling of each better impulse may have worked in as a permitted part of God's plan. I don't mean that you have any shadow of an excuse for blaming God for it. You freely chose to hate everything good. By your own obstinate wrong-headedness you have proved yourself

not to have been one of God's elect on earth; but it is still open to you to prove that you are one of His elect for salvation out of hell. It is never too late to mend. God's eternal decree for your rescue is matched and mated with the moment when you rouse yourself to make your choice of Him for your Saviour. Galpin, do it now!"

Galpin launched a terrible oath against my God and His decrees. "If God's decrees have been mixed up in the hell of a time I've been having ever since I can remember," he said; "then I've got more cause than I thought to hate Him. I've often wondered why there should be such a perfect devil inside me all the time, and I've wondered and exulted at the power of my own will to stand out against God and to choose everything but what was right; and now you tell me it was because I wasn't one of God's elect. That makes the whole equation complete and the whole problem clear. I tell you I was guarded carefully from every good influence. I lived in Christian communities, and no Christian ever took me in hand to tell me what was what, and warn me away from hell. No sir, you neither! You came the nearest that morning on the bridge; but you were mighty meachin about it then. I was started in boyhood on the way to hell, and all the way along the track was greased, and now I know who to thank for it. Want me to believe in Him and love Him? Not much! I might

have done it before; but not since you've helped me to find Him out."

"Mr. Galpin," I pleaded, "I wish you would think rationally about all this for five minutes. All your existence you've been hardening your heart, and when Pharaoh hardened his own heart, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. He would have softened it any minute you would have let your heart soften. You were a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; but God has endured you with much long suffering; because He has been planning to make known the riches of His glory on you, as a vessel of mercy before prepared unto glory, just whenever you get tired of the one thing and ask Him to make you the other. I believe that change is coming for you. It might have come long ago, if you had been willing. Don't tell me you haven't felt good influences. That second wife of yours; she told me she had been a church member. She seemed a gentle creature —"

"She was almost afraid to call her soul her own when I was around," Galpin said. "She had about as much influence over me as a rush blade in a river bed has to change the current. I married her for her money, and when I finally got that fact beat into her dumb head, she threw up her hands and just stood to deliver. And your God has been about as weak in His line of influence on me as the rest of you. I don't

believes He cares for my soul, or He would try a little harder. He'd get a club and bring me under. Now the god of hell — the one whose worship I have been leading in down here — he *does* things."

"Satan only acts by God's sovereign permission," I answered. "With all his might and cunning he finds himself baffled, checkmated resistlessly out-generaled and over-mastered from point to point. He is fighting a losing battle, and does things in desperate, hot haste. God has the entire final victory in view; so He moves deliberately.

'God's ways are dark but soon or late
They touch the golden hills of day:
The evil cannot brook delay,
The good can well afford to wait.'

"He is patient because He is eternal. He is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, because He loves us so. Unerringly He will punish every sin; but His punishment will be as much for reclamation as for retribution. You have been under His rod ever since I first knew you and still you are like a child too proud to cry out. The very rebound of your own soul keeps you bruised and raw. When will you get through kicking against the pricks? I have seen you take some severe clubbing and act as if you didn't feel it. How about that time we slapped the thousand dollar fine on

you for persisting in selling liquor to the camp on your farm? ”

“ Yes but they knocked it down to four hundred in the court room,” Galpin protested.

“ But there were lawyer’s fees,” I persisted, “ and, anyway, we blocked your game, and the camp stayed dry all summer, much to the satisfaction of mothers and sisters and sweethearts of the boys, over a third of the Union. All this was God dealing with you. He never really abandoned you to prosper in evil, as some men seem to be abandoned. He has curbed you and checked you at every turn. It was sufficiently evident on earth that the force in you never quite found lee-way, and that God never let you draw a really happy breath. And I am sure you and Godson expressed yourselves frankly enough just now about your impotence to get the drink ; to show that God is not allowing you to have your own way. Don’t tell me you think God doesn’t care for you, when He takes all these pains to hold you back from destroying yourself.”

“ He does it because he likes to torture people,” was Galpin’s reply. “ Maybe I had some little chance once ; but it is gone now ; and according to your belief, God from all eternity predestinated me to lose it. So now He takes it out in torturing me with hell fire for the remaining eternity.”

“ But Mr. Prester claims that he doesn’t believe like that,” interposed Lovejoy gently.

“He seems to hold some modified and extended kind of Calvinism which he never got a chance to encourage us with on earth; but it sounds very much to the point down here.”

“I was feeling after it most of the time when we knew each other there,” I said. “I did not wish to give you false hopes. I tried to set before you the straight road to heaven along by the cross of Jesus. I tried to save you from taking your chances on coming this terrible long way around through hell. I can see now how the doctrine I was supposed to stand for just cut me off from really influencing you at all. God knows how sorry I am for it. If you had only penetrated my ecclesiastical reserve at any time and asked me the straight question if God could be God predestinating people to hell and then keeping them there; I would have eagerly denied it. So would any other Presbyterian minister of my day. Some had mentally squirmed away from the thought by one method, some by another. To say that God’s electing grace had singled out certain individuals and passed over others without definitely and positively decreeing their damnation was merely to juggle with words. Some were secretly finding relief in the belief in conditional immortality — that the lost soul literally perished — a result which seemed less harrowing than eternal punishment. I believe many of my brethren had practically waved good-by to Calvin

and Augustine, and at heart had taken refuge in that shallow Arminianism which really lay at the bottom of much of the irreligion of our time, making God less than God in men's conception of Him, and abandoning humanity to the play of its own uncertain choice. But the greater number of us just conscientiously refrained from thinking definitely upon eternity. I was a long time coming to a consistent belief in God's plan for His world myself ; so what could I say? Still I believe I might have cheerfully admitted, any time I had been questioned, that a lost soul in hell would have a fair right to feel hard toward a God who let it be born in sin with a darkened mind, let it wind up in hell, either by reprobation or praeterition, and there abandoned it to its changeless fate. But now I can confidently plead with you to turn to God, believe in Him and love Him ; because I know that He still plans for your salvation. Your very presence in hell is all a part of God's plan to bring you to repentance. It is your own fault, and your own great loss, if you make it such a long job for Him."

"But perchance He planned it for a long job in the first place," Godson objected.

"If He did, it was to bring you a richer experience of salvation than could have been worked out by a short one," I protested. "The obstinacy of your own nature also has a part in the equation. You do not know God's plan. I do not

know it. The one sensible thing for you to do is to repent now and turn to God before worse befall."

Wilkinson and Willoughby had now joined our group, drawn by some parallel current of feeling, and I felt that I had before me a precious congregation of five souls to save. "Suppose we pray over it, boys," I suggested. "God often makes things clear to us by the method of prayer, when we would come only slowly to the truth by reasoning."

But there was still a barrier of unwillingness in their mood. "We all know you mean well, Dominie," the outside Wilkinson acknowledged. "For my part, I wish you could talk these things over with the Devil. We have worked for him so long, and enjoyed all the fun he could give us: we don't feel just square to shake him without a word to say good-bye. It appears to me your doctrine would interest him the most of us all. If you want to pull hell, I believe you'll have to pull it from the top — first, Old Nick, then old Mack. After that the rest of us would come easy."

The suggestion startled me; yet there was a fascination in it. I had been intending to ask them what conscious response they received when they prayed to Satan, or how they were made aware that they really had his attention; but now, by Wilkinson's own proposal, I could perhaps legitimately employ their help to satisfy my cu-

riosity on this point by actual experiment. Throughout my life on earth (especially in Tippleton), and now of late in my acquaintance with hell, I had become increasingly conscious of Satan as an opposing, thwarting, and befooling power toward all that moved for betterment within and around me; but Satan had been to me 'as a heathen man and a publican'; I had never consciously addressed him, either by way of apostrophe or appeal. The thrill of the idea tingled in my soul as Wilkinson spoke; but it seemed like our first June plunge into the bay at Mill River; for the shudder of it almost overmastered the thrill. "Boys," I protested, "this thing is immense. Somebody ought to do it, I know. But little Nat Prester isn't really the right man. We should get Jerry McAuley, or General Booth, or Finney, or Whitfield, or Luther, or John Knox. The most strenuous soul-shaker that ever lived would be weak for the job. The Devil could more easily overpower my sympathies and confuse my intellect, by the very yearning of my heart."

"That's just how you will get at him," Wilkinson declared. "And perhaps you can win him on that line — who knows? Satan has not often been approached along the line of pity by your profession. He would, maybe, overpower you on any side but the heart-side."

But Willoughby was skeptical and cautious.

“There can’t any good come,” he said, “from a parson hob-nobbing with the Devil.”

“Friends,” I said, “I will have to talk to God about this. I would surely walk into trouble, if I should exceed my marching orders.”

CHAPTER XIII

It was an encouraging sign to see these five damned souls bow reverently as I began to pray: "Master," I pleaded, "show me Thy will. I have no heart for this task, unless it is one of Thy whatsoevers. I have no desire to talk with Satan; if I cannot conscientiously pray for him first. Forgive me if I err in judgment, if I exceed Thy loving will while I try to pray for Satan, as wife and I, awhile back, were praying for one of his lieutenants. I know he is bad. I know that Satan's pride and disobedience have been the fountain head of evil and of woe, which otherwise has no explanation in God's world. I cannot pray that Thou judge him not for all the havoc he has wrought. I am sure that the horror of it all must have been pressing most heavily upon Satan's own soul all these ages. I do not ask to have the awful burden of it lifted by a feather's weight from his conscience, or one pang of his remorse made less acute. Increase his capacity for sorrow, and let him suffer till his proud heart breaks. In pity grant him birth-pangs of a better soul. Oh my Saviour, my God! my intellect is too limited to take in even more than a little of Thy great plans: I can only feel that if it were my world, I would move most earnestly to bring the worst one in it to repentance. I cannot in my littleness see any other possible way to bring it

out all glad in the end. Probably the only way to do it, would be to deal strenuously with him, bring his plans to nought, rescue his victims, reduce his conquests, confine him to a narrowing prison house of failure; and yet love and pity his wrong, proud soul, until love and sternness mingled should triumph in his complete salvation; that throughout all the eternity beyond he should love me best of all my creatures, having been most forgiven. If I can help, even by the stirring of a hair, to change the Devil's mind about all this, I will be so glad to talk with him; although I shrink and tremble, and would rather keep to the little tasks of winning the humblest of his deluded ones. Please do not let me take any step which would compromise loyalty to God in any way, or hinder my influence with these men who listen while I pray. Oh Christ! help them to seek salvation themselves, and not wait for the Devil. Help them manfully to throw off his yoke and, by God's aid, to triumph over his malice. Help them not to think of some possible easy way of being saved, after the leading spirits of evil have succumbed and left it easy for their dupes to shake off the unholy spell cast upon them; but rather help them to glory in revolt against Devil and ex-rumseller alike, and to take so much more satisfaction in getting converted to God because it is hard in the environment of hell, and because it means fight. Take care of little me, oh God, in this strange enterprise; for

I hardly know where I am coming out. Even now stop me if it is wrong; for I feel Satan coming at my call, and I am weak and cowardly to deal with him, unless I can be sure it is God's own commission for me just now. David and Goliath hardly avail for a comparison of disparity in this encounter; and unless I can go to meet this greatest Philistine in the name of the Lord of Hosts, I would rather even yet, retreat from meeting him, and be laughed at by all hell."

Of all the wonderful things about that complexity of marvels which we call living, the most stupendous is prayer. That the finite may talk with the Infinite One and be answered, as I at that moment, with the complete assurance, "Certainly I will be with thee!" is perhaps the central mystery of living; passing the explanation of ages: yet within the test of any child. This experience of answered prayer, which alone gave meaning to our life on earth, and which thrills the life of heaven with its increasing wonder, finds its crowning glory of ineffable surprise when it comes to us in hell. There at that moment I saw God in Christ as I had never seen Him before; even in a hundred years of heaven — not with faith changed to sight, but with faith clarified into a soul-sense infinitely greater than sight. The beatific vision of soul into Soul, each the finite soul and the Infinite Soul, yearning with a common pity and reaching forward with a com-

mon hope toward the same all compensating joy, came to me there in hell as it had never quite come even in heaven. I saw more in my Saviour; yet what I saw seemed only the beginning of what He had to show me, whose revealing would come with the deeper experience of eternities still unveiled, and I was ready to exclaim with joy of infinite gain from measurable sacrifice —

Just to be *here* and to look on Thy face
Would through the ages be glory for me.

So I was prepared to meet “the spirit who stands opposed.” My Master’s presence did not leave me as I entered that of the Master of the unsaved. I knew that he stood behind me while I stood to face Apolyon. How much of either transcendent presence, or of what passed between me and each was apprehended by my five earth-born companions I cannot now conjecture. Perhaps even Satan may be better known by one from whose eyes the scales have fallen in conversion, and Satan may have felt safe in telling me things at that hour which he felt his dupes could not receive, even if I told them. I noticed only that they lingered near quietly, and with a certain subdued reverence, which could hardly have been paid to the evil one alone.

I am sorry to disappoint any one who may anticipate an exciting description of my meeting with the Devil. There was little that was spectacular about it. When the interview came, I

was astonished most at the ease with which it was obtained, and at the matter-of-course manner in which it began. I was reminded somewhat of an occasion on which some of us pastors in St. Louis found an interview with Colonel Ed. Butler, the city boss, for the purpose of inquiring why Protestant churches were apparently discriminated against in the placing of electric arc lights along the city streets. I was impressed now to find myself in the presence of an over-mastering intelligence trained and exercised along lines with which I was unfamiliar, one whose thoughts overlapped mine in every direction, even while they were flowing in an opposite current, and one who could so easily confuse and entangle my small conceptions, that my only safeguard in dealing with him would be in a childlike directness and simplicity of purpose. I was astonished to find that the manner of conversation with Satan was not essentially different from that with a fellow human spirit, or with one of the angels, and while I could not mentally grasp the size of the personality with which I was dealing, I could distinctly apprehend the particular thought which he condescendingly directed at me in response to my own. I began by telling his lordship that I had come into his dominions looking for lost souls, and that these five of his choicest subjects had conceived the desire to have me interview him first. "They feel," I said, "that you should set the example of repentance, and of

turning to God, which will be easy for them to follow."

His Satanic Majesty did not laugh, as I had feared, but answered gravely that by worthier reasoning it would seem far easier for these men to practice repentance who had been opposed to God less than two centuries, than for himself, whose enfranchisement dated from before the dawn of human history. "They are free to repent, if they wish," he said. "I would not stand in the way. I am ready to tell them at any time that they would be better off in heaven. The poor accommodations and consolations I am able to afford them here do not make up for their loss in being cast out from paradise. They will certainly get on the good side of God, if they know on which side their bread is buttered."

It reminded me of some of the temperance talk I had heard from saloonkeepers. "But it is your influence which holds them back," I protested. "But for you, they and the world would never have known an evil thought. You have been the author of the great sorrow, and it surely lies within your power to bring in at one wide flood, the triumph of redemption's greater joy; for with your conversion the current of evil would cease to flow for lack of a source."

But Satan demurred at this assertion. "The love of liberty will always spring in virile hearts," he declared. "Should one succumb to God, an-

other would promptly step into his place and raise anew the standard of independence."

"But how can there be any real independence of the All Father," I questioned. "You yourself owe your existence and your original exalted nature to Him. He keeps you moment by moment from returning to nothingness. He upholds all things by the word of His power."

"Yet he cannot keep me from living my own life," Satan exclaimed exultingly. "He cannot coerce me into loving Him, so long as I prefer to hate."

"Cannot, because will not," I ventured to answer. "God takes a pride in your freedom and prefers, perhaps, to win you back to a glad and willing acceptance of His forgiveness and His love. Pardon me, oh Devil! but my Heavenly Father seems to me to have borne with you all these ages as a parent carrying a little child during the tantrum of an hour. Your resistance to His will and to His love has been just that futile and necessarily evanescent. Free? you are free to shake your puny fist at His great, kind face for a little while; but His love in severity must conquer you in the end. It is His arms that are around you in all your rage, and you can never, never, never forget that He is your father still."

"Now you are allowing your anthropomorphic fancies to run away with you," Satan protested. "Because God enjoys the accidental advantage

of previous existence and of creative power, why should I find myself constrained to truckle to His wishes, or to pretend that I like His ways when I do not? The existence and the role in life which He has conferred upon me, has not had in it much to thank Him for. He needed a protagonist, according to His conception of what would make the plot of the drama of His universe most interesting; so He let me be it. The best I can do is to play *my* part with vigor and persistency, but why could I not have had Michael's? "

"Simply because you chose the part of Satan," I replied. "You thought you liked that best; yet surely you must be almost getting enough of it."

"Why did He let me choose the part in the first place," Satan protested. "He foreordains whatsoever comes to pass. Why did He not put in train some of all this great love you dilate upon and persuade me to think again before I cast the die of revolt. That mistake once made, where can love come in again? Can God show it, trying to bring me to humiliate myself by ever throwing up the fight, which He originally planned or permitted me to begin? "

"You forget, sir," I replied, "that I was not there when it happened. I can hardly conceive how this estrangement of your grand spirit from God ever began. We mortals have a theory that it was pride. As the great light-bearer, you stood next to the Godhead in rank and in faculty, and

you conceived the thought of being the other god — what Paul calls the ‘god of this cycle.’ Strange! when there was no older devil to suggest this one evil thought to you! Where could it have come from? God could not have placed it in your mind. He is not the author of evil, neither tempteth He any man or angel. You must have been drawn away by your own lust of prestige. So you chose your lot simultaneously with God’s eternal foreordination of your lot. Was not that the way of it?”

“Young man!” Satan replied thoughtfully, “I have been puzzling over this problem for ages, and, as Milton suggests, it is still the central theme of many a debate in hell. I believe this whole tiresome business was God’s fault. There was a time when I was not, and God was thinking over all this even then.”

“It wasn’t time but eternity,” I protested. “And it isn’t scientific to say God *was* thinking. God thinks in an eternal N-O-W.”

“Never mind! it has had the same effect for my wretched career,” complained Satan; “and I wish to know, what did He, or does He, do it for? Why should I be singled out to stir up all this muss, and to bear the infamy of the universe?”

“I cannot tell,” I replied, “unless it is because you like the job. There is only one key to all this riddle, and that I believe you carry in your hand, if you wish to use it.”

"Tell me!" said Satan. "It is the key of repentance," I replied.

Satan laughed at last, and hell shook. "Repentance?" he cried. "For me? Young fellow, you are talking wildly. Try to think of the murders I have planned and consummated. Try to think of the wars I have stirred up and of my glorying in the carnage of a million battlefields. I have robbed millions of innocence and honor; I have spoiled the happiness of millions of homes and lives. I have gloated over meanness and injustice; I have been on the side of the theft and the lie. I tell you I love it all. I smack my lips in blood and pollution. You say, 'Try what repentance can.' I answer, 'But what can it when one cannot repent?'"

"The stubbornness of King Henry's knees was as wax compared with that of my heart. Repentance? What would God want with my repentance? If He should let me repent and be forgiven, He would advertise to his angelic universe that there was no spirit in His justice. He would make himself the laughing stock of hell. Sometimes repentance may come too late. We may find no space for it, though we seek it carefully and with tears. Repentance? Pah! you disgust me. Like Papoleon with the impossible, I would say, 'Never mention to me that beast of a word.' Defiance is the word for me. With open scorn, with exhaustless subterfuge and counterplot, I will still spit it in God's face. Were

every heart turned craven, were hell shrunk by desertion until I alone was left, were God's hand heavy upon me, and His final word to me, 'Repent or moan forever!' I would still bite and tear His hand and snarl my deathless hate. But as yet there seems not so much need for me to contemplate this possible *finale*. Hell is still something of a kingdom. The biggest half of things still comes my way. And I can say still with some complacency, 'Better to rule in hell than serve in Heaven.' "

"And yet," I replied, "the fact that you have thus much to say about it rather reassures me that the subject of repentance has been often in your thoughts. The old love that was in the beginning between you and God still yearns somewhere within you. And I still think this is the key to the whole problem of God's plan for your life. Some day you will try it in the lock of hell. And when you turn to God with the heart-tears held back for ages, you will find a place waiting for you which belongs to no one else. Of all the universe, you will love most, because most forgiven. I cannot foresee whether you will foolishly wait to be the last to give in your allegiance, or whether just now, in response to my poor pleading, you will humble yourself before God, and turn the might of your satanic influence into the undoing of your dreadful work and the bringing back of lost souls to God. Whenever you do it, that will be your first

rational, well-balanced action since before you did the other thing. Oh Satan, do it now! I say repentance will prove to be the key to the riddle of your strange destiny; because I do believe it would bring to your poor, lacerated soul the greatest joy of forgiveness, the grandest mission of reparation ever foreordained for a created being. Why do you keep yourself out of it for a moment, or for an eternity! Oh let your strained heart break in penitence just now! Christ is here and He is waiting for your love. His atonement is great enough to avail even for you. Oh for the pity of it, don't be a fool any longer! I know I am only a tiny bit of a mortal, and you are but just short of infinite; yet I am right and right with God, and you are so altogether wrong! Poor, foolish Devil! I dare to pity you. Won't you come to Jesus now and be saved?"

Satan was moved. The wonderful thing of it all was to see suns and worlds still moving on in their orbits while he hesitated. I could only pray dumbly and stretch out my arms to him in spirit. And I felt from behind greater arms stretched out to him above mine. The keen pain of a frozen soul approaching fire was in Satan's aspect. Gleams of hidden radiance came in opal tints to the surface of his spirit. Anguished memories, incredible hope, contrition overmastering pride moved in mighty currents up and across the sea of his great being. My consciousness rocked and swayed like a frail boat brought in touch

with upheaving waters. The world's long hope deferred seemed on the point of sudden consummation. A moment more, and God's universe might be reeling with the sweep of a mighty joy. The great Sinner stood at the point of repentance, The unconsciousness of other knowing beings as to what was impending rendered the moment all the more intense. Only the five human companions must have felt something of it, for they lay prostrate beside me. With the bending of that mighty will which was hesitating there, hell would crack open. Heaven's love would meet perdition's penitence in worldwide ecstasy of grief and joy. All hung upon one sigh from Satan's soul for better things. Would it come? Would the strong heart, age-hardened in evil, break just now? I beheld his indecision with eager gaze, every fibre of my thoughts quivering, tingling with expectation and with awe.

CHAPTER XIV

But there came a mysterious shadow over Satan's aspect which had begun to glow with unspeakable possibilities. The change puzzled and frightened me, for it did not seem to come from within, but was rather like the shadow of an approach cast from without. My heart turned sick with disappointment and foreboding, as I waited. Was there some greater Devil coming, able to check the movings of prevenient grace upon the soul of this one? As the newcomer drew near every trace of conscience, of compunction, of finer impulse, was blurred over and disappeared from the Satanic soul. With alarm I turned to regard this unexpected visitor. My astonishment deepened as I perceived it to be of human race and at last divined that it was of female sex. A woman spirit, swollen to monstrous size and power, hideous for very symmetry of soulless form, confronted me with a gaze of what might have been anger, if less mixed with cunning. "This is my earth-wife," Satan said in introduction. "By the way, she must have been a contemporary of yours, and although you probably never met, you must have heard of her exploits. She was a Mrs. Guinness, and was at one time engaged in farming and a few other things out in Illinois."

I hardly knew how to reply for embarrassment at the sudden recollection of a newspaper story

read at random one Saturday night, when I was looking to see if my church notice was in straight. How could I acknowledge my realization that this must be the woman who made herself useful interring about her house and barnyard the bodies of murdered people sent to her from Chicago in trunks and boxes; varying the monotony of this by attracting to her rural home, by means of matrimonial advertisements, men who were never heard from subsequently? But Satan read it all in my expression, and replied to that, "It is true that this is the lady. She seemed, for sheer, sordid deviltry, a worthy mate. Lucretia Borgia seemed hardly to be named in comparison, even if all the stories told about her were true. Besides this lady had so long sought for a worthy husband; it seemed only poetic justice that her diligence should be suitably rewarded at last."

I was interested as well as horrified. I very much wished to ask a question, but hesitated for fear of seeming discourteous. Again the satanic insight helped me. "My dear," he said, "I think the reverend gentleman has something to say to you."

"Then let him say it while he has the chance," the former Mrs. Guinness responded.

"I was wondering how you must find it," I explained—"to have a husband you cannot dispose of, and to live in a world of men spirits that are indestructible."

I realized that I had made a mistake as soon

as I had said it. The queen of hell expanded by several sizes, and with her back turned to me, demanded of her illustrious husband why she should be expected to talk to me. "Put him in the dungeon," she said shortly.

"We can attend to that later," Satan said, to appease her. "Perhaps the worst punishment of presumption we could give him in the meanwhile would be to tell him a few things, and see him tremble."

"Am I at liberty then to ask such questions as I may feel drawn to ask?" I inquired somewhat timidly.

"Go ahead," replied the Infernal Consort. "I suppose we can stand it as long as you can."

I avoided at first the question I had asked before, with an inkling that my own probable sentence was somewhat closely bound up in the answer to it; but I suggested another cause I had found for wonderment about this singular woman. "Did you never dread the stalking of ghosts about your farmhouse? Did your flesh never creep in the night when you were alone with some corpse?"

"Do you suppose I would have taken to that line if I hadn't had nerve?" she answered. "I took a pride in my work; I guess the same as you ever did in yours."

"But when the work was all done," I suggested. "When the last guilty evidence was removed and the strain of secrecy and of fear of stumbling

against neighbors, or hired man, in the dark, was lightened; when there was nothing left to do but think, and the details of the last job were fresh in your mind — ”

“I was generally tired enough to go to sleep,” Mrs. Satan answered. “It was a sort of old story to me, you know. I got my hand in when I kept a lying-in place for abortions in the city. Sometimes the patients died under treatment, and their remains had to be attended to in some way.”

“But why did you burn your farmhouse and decamp?” I queried. “No one seems to have suspected you definitely. You were not in any new danger. Was it not your own nervous condition which called for a change? Perhaps you had gotten to seeing things at night.”

She did not altogether deny the truth of my supposition. “The best thing gets tiresome after awhile,” she said. “You preachers have nothing to say. Didn’t you usually make a change every three or four years?”

“Well tell me,” I asked more eagerly, “Did you never feel any movings of compassion over the lacerated corpse of a poor fellow being sent to you for interment — the victim of some plot or quarrel not your own? Did you never have to struggle with some softer feeling in luring to their death your would-be husbands — in mixing the poison, or striking the blow or fatal stab, or springing the trap (or however else you did it) which cut each one off in the height of his hopes?”

Surely some of them must have been good-looking fellows — somewhat soft, perhaps; weak, no doubt; but amiable, good-natured, amenable, innocent; or they wouldn't have brought money with them in coming to marry you. You must have written affectionate letters — wistful, pathetic, pensive. You must have charged each to come secretly — that no one might know until your hearts had found opportunity to grow together in the honeymoon. How could you take such advantage of an unsuspecting fellow creature? How did you feel when you saw each writhing in his last agony — with the look of speechless reproach in filming eyes — when life went out and you were in that awful loneliness with the dead? ”

“ You want to know so much,” the woman answered. “ I'll just tell you, and let you stand it the best you can. The kind that were sent to me in trunks and boxes I felt somebody had to take care of. If it hadn't been me, it would have had to be somebody else. So I did what I could for them, and earned whatever money there was in it. That was the only line I was in at first; but there was a time when they didn't come fast enough to make it pay, and I thought of the other thing. The closing up of the deal was always done quietly and decently. There wasn't any writhing agony or any dying looks. They just took a cup of tea, or glass of liquor that I

brought them after they were in bed the night before what would have been our wedding day, and then the poor fool would go to sleep and I would bury him alive. The only difference here in hell is that we bury them alive, and they stay alive after they are buried; but they stay buried just the same. You're the first one I ever told beforehand. You'll understand better when you're in it."

These last words were spoken in such fury of feelingless determination that I began to wonder if I ought not to make a strong effort to convert this woman, if only to ward off serious consequences from myself. Yet the very self-interest involved gave my attempt a certain embarrassment and stiffness. "I cannot see what you gained by all this strange and terrible course," I said. "No money you could make by it on earth could possibly buy you one happy breath, and there is no money at all to be made in hell. Won't you give it all up now, and seek for God's mercy upon your soul?"

The great woman regarded me with astonishment, and a visible trill of something deeper. "What sort of a crank are you?" she asked. "Nobody ever spoke to me like that before. Where did you come from anyway?"

"On earth I was a Presbyterian," I answered meekly. "My citizenship is in heaven. I came here looking for lost souls to save. You poor

soul! if no one ever took an interest in you before, I will now. It is not too late for you to look to Jesus Christ now and be saved."

"Would I have the first place in heaven?" the Satana asked. "Would I be the only woman admitted to the Freemason's lodge? What would they do for me there?"

"If you were truly saved," I replied, "you would not seek the highest place in Heaven; you would feel unworthy of the lowest. You would desire most of all to get back to hell and try to right and atone for some of the horrible wrongs your blind selfishness has wrought."

"Then I guess I don't care to be saved," she answered promptly and decidedly.

"Your only gain will be to lose," I urged. "You have been gaining through your whole existence until you stand, it seems, at the highest bad eminence to which a human being could aspire; yet all this has only availed to bind you down to foul, ghoulisn drudgeries, making you hated, detested, dreaded, impossible to be loved even by Satan himself."

"Nobody ever bound me down to anything," she protested sullenly. "I always did just to suit myself. I had the physical strength of three ordinary women. I hardly ever made a plan that I didn't carry out. I broke laws as fast as they got in my way; yet I was never arrested but once, and that time I got out on bail and skipped. You see I'm not a likely subject

for conversion. I don't 'surrender all,' nor nothing. I've got my own life to live, and I propose to go on living it. I've outwitted God and man for two centuries, and I say damn your God! damn your heaven! let me have things my own way in hell."

"I admit that it seems a difficult task to open your eyes to a higher self-interest," was my reply, "but I would like to talk with you about the right and wrong of it. If it was conceivable that you could gain the whole universe, heaven included, by doing wrong, still it would be wrong, and if you could lose all, even heaven, by doing right, still right would be right and wrong would be wrong, and that alone would make the compelling difference. And even if God himself could go wrong, you could have no alternative, for real peace of mind, but to keep on trying to do right. For the shame of one, and the assurance of the other; for the very wrongness or doing wrong and the rightness of doing right, I would counsel you to turn. Positively there is no other specific for that mean, low-down feeling; and you know you cannot endure it to all eternity. You know you cannot keep this sort of thing up forever. You are only making the cycles of restitution harder. Every vile, heartless, wicked action of your existence will be a cause to you for eternal regret. Oh for Christ's sake come out of it all and live square!"

"You are talking about something I don't

know about," Mrs. Satan answered. "And I tell you I don't want to know. You make me feel strange and uncomfortable. You throw things up to me that I won't take from you, or from anybody. I suppose this must have been the way you were working on my royal husband when I came. Let his majesty show the white feather, if he feels like it. Then I'll take charge here myself."

The Devil laughed long and loud. "You could not take the charge of the millionth part of it," he said.

His lady showed some pique. "You know I have been growing," she protested. "Did I not manage nearly eighteen thousand temptations at once by our last count?"

"And that," declared Satan, "was not the millionth part."

"Leave me the whole contract and I'd grow to it," the Satana still objected.

"If you will not scorn the opinion of a third party, though also a mortal and to that extent not entirely disinterested," I interposed, "feminine faculty naturally stretches to a multiplicity of details. For instance, our Presbyterian Woman's Foreign Missionary Board managed a matter which the men of the general board gave up because they couldn't stand it. They kept a great number of our churches, Sunday Schools, and lesser organizations in personal correspondence with a great number of our Mission stations around

the world. Our Woman's Home board showed a similar facility, through every Presbyterian society, for keeping each little society of each church to account for its gifts to each of a considerable list of special mission schools. Just for the fun of the thing, and entirely without pay, some good women in New York organized an International Sunshine Society, and kept in helpful correspondence with thousands of branches all over the world. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union organized its work under more than forty different departments, just because they enjoyed doing it in that way. This makes a man's brain reel. I have talked with women in a room full of people, and found that they could answer pertinently, and yet keep a general idea of what other women were saying in various parts of the room."

"Nevertheless, I got on without this one for several ages," the Devil still argued somewhat gruffly. "I believe she is just giving me a dare to repent in earnest. I have half a mind to do it, and show her where she would be without my help. Where would she advertise for a husband to take my place I wonder."

"I would send at once for Noble Grand Master McGammon," the lady suggested coquettishly.

Of course McGammon appeared. "Reverend Sir!" he exclaimed in astonishment, on seeing me.

"He is trying to convert Satan," laughed the ex-widow. "Yes, and me too."

"I supposed, Sir, that you were engaged in looking for your brother," McGammon remarked reproachfully.

"And my other brothers, I think I told you," was my apology.

"Also a sister or two?" McGammon asked with a slight inclination of soul toward the great lady of hell, and a tone almost too near a sneer to be in keeping with his accustomed character.

"The lady came," I explained, "when I was talking with her husband. I have indeed been trying to show her the reason for turning to God, as I had also been endeavoring to show it to her husband."

"Ah!" commented McGammon, "His Majesty then also is one of your brothers!"

"He, too, is God's child," I argued.

"And I believe he had him almost persuaded to be a Christian," continued the woman.

"He lately made certain appeals to me likewise," McGammon acknowledged, "but it was soon over, and no great harm done."

"He don't seem to be satisfied unless he is trying to convert somebody," said the scarlet woman.

Before I could thank her for this great praise, McGammon moderated my pleasure in it by remarking that he enjoyed the honor of the Reverend Prester's acquaintance on earth, and while

he had shown there a similar proneness to ill-timed persuasion, no very marked results in conversions had been apparent. "They were for the most part rather light-weight characters who yielded to it," he stated. "I do not myself apprehend any considerable upheaval in hell from the amiable propaganda upon which the reverend gentleman has apparently set forth."

But Satan himself spoke gravely. "You are only mortals after all," he said. "You see hardly beyond where your noses once were. This thing has a power in it that you do not realize. After one or two vapouring enthusiasts of Prester's stamp, I foresee the approach of a determined invasion of our dominions, and trouble ahead for us greater than that which missionaries and reformers have yet been able to give us."

"Then why don't you pen this one up at once, and be done with him?" queried the Satana.

"Hush!" exclaimed Satan. "Your insight is of no more avail than your foresight. Can you not see the Other with him? It is the One behind that I am concerned about. I have had to deal with Him so long. His visible presence here bodes ill."

"If there's another, down with them both to the dungeon!" exclaimed his spouse again.

"I've tried that before," said the great Protagonist. "Once I had that Other crucified, buried; stone at the sepulchre; door sealed with

the seal of the governor, and a watch set. Of what avail was it all? That was the very beginning of His triumph."

"But still you did not turn coward," McGammon whispered, awed by a partial understanding of the situation. "Will you do it now?"

"Not coward but diplomat," Satan answered. "Give me time to ponder and plan. The highest type of courage is not that which makes impetuous attacks and sudden reprisals; but rather that which displays coolness in defeat, yields what it must, and bides its time."

"Who's talking about defeat?" the Satana asked. "I think the time to head off these impertinent intrusions is at the start. Make a terrible example of the first one, before the thing gets too common."

"The hardest lesson I have had to learn through the advancing ages," was Satan's rejoinder, "has been the lesson of toleration. At first I was all for gibbets, crosses, the stake, the torch, the rack, the headsman. It took me long to learn that the cause I hated gained power from being persecuted. Then having been long taught, I conceived the plan of staying the spread of unwelcome ideas by toleration. I taught men not to oppose, not to inquire, not to discuss: to regard all cults with unconcern, to assent from the lips outward, to hold themselves aloof from positive conviction, to leave vital religion on one side and flock to any ceremonious make-believe, to

smother strong doctrine under a conspiracy of silence and to chill enthusiasm by the use of a damp blanket of mild surprise. I find this policy works more effectively than that of faggots and bullets. So if I can keep hell not hostile but calmly indifferent to the hopes of Christianity, and if I can only make such fellows as this one appear tiresome and extreme; if I can avoid making him interesting by any ostensible persecution, but just watch a chance to befool him, trip him, separate him from his companion, I may, perhaps, e'er long have him stumbling into the limbus of used-up souls."

"I already have him incarcerated after a manner," volunteered McGammon. "He cannot get out of the Lodge area."

"But have you considered the harm he may do inside?" asked the Adversary.

"How tired you must get," the woman exclaimed, "guarding against every checkmate, and playing such a slow game!"

"I do indeed," Satan acknowledged somewhat wearily. "Sometimes I feel disposed to let my men go, and yield the board."

"If you do," threatened the lady, "the Noble Grand and I have warned you what will happen."

"How preciously detestable you both are!" exclaimed Satan, "and yet you and McGammon are equally necessary to me!"

Like other people of assured station, accustomed to conversing freely before inferiors, they

had not seemed to be caring if I overheard their conversation; but at this point the Satana, becoming aware of my close attention, turned upon me in vexation. "You sneaking, snivelling, interloping salvationist!" she cried. "My Lord may dilly dally with your case awhile if he must, but sooner or later you are my prey. A meagre quarry you will be, after all the full blooded men I have kissed to sleep; but such as you are, I will trap you yet, and when I bury you, I will bury you deep."

As she spoke, I saw clearly a blemish I had begun to notice before upon the smooth skin of her soul. It was a double row of eight little callosities, four in a row, opposite each other in pairs, such as would be left upon the finger bases and upper palm of a human hand by the diligent use of a spade.

Then I recalled an annual saying of Doctor Hitchcock in the church history class *à pro-pos* of Catherine de Medici. "If you wish a devil," he would say, "look for a she-devil."

CHAPTER XV

"Reverend Sir," advised the Noble Grand Master McGammon somewhat dryly, "it seems that this would be a fitting time for you to continue the search for your brother."

"Surely His Majesty can tell me at once where my brother is at this time," I objected.

"What is your brother's name?" inquired the Ruler of Darkness.

"Harry," I replied.

"Harry Prester," mused Satan: "that is strange now. I cannot recall or observe him among all my subjects. By the way, not meaning to compliment you overmuch, do you know I find strangely few by the name of Prester inhabiting my dominions."

"They have all been children of the covenant," I explained, "brought up on the Bible and Shorter Catechism, family prayer and consistent Puritan living."

"Are you sure, then, that your brother is in hell?" the Adversary asked again.

"I only know that he has not yet turned up in heaven," I answered. "And if he is neither in the upper world, nor yet in the nether world, then where in the world is he?"

"Dante would say," suggested Satan, "that you might find him in the limbus of souls without color."

"But is there really such a place?" I queried.

"You will have to search and find out," replied the Father of Pharisees suavely. "I can only suggest that your Master says of a certain class, 'Because you are neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.' And if He doesn't want them in heaven, I am sure I do not care much for them in hell. These negative souls were immensely useful to me on earth, but they are hardly worth their brimstone here."

"Nevertheless I would suggest to the Reverend Prester," McGammon interposed, "that he start on his search at once. We have men in our various orders who are not so bad as the worst, nor yet so good as the best. His Majesty might easily overlook one of them for lack of anything in him of which to take notice, and for the honor of the ancient Prester name, if this one isn't in hell at all, his absence ought to be ascertained. I feel that this matter is important."

"I do wish to find Harry," I confessed, ignoring the taunt, but hitherto I have had no clue. I have simply gone from one whom I met to the next, as in the game of puss-wants-a-corner, and each one encountered has been so interesting for his own need of someone to look him up, that I have made slow progress."

"I will give you a guide," the Noble Grand offered graciously. "I might go with you myself, only a pressure of many matters prevents."

I thanked him for this courtesy, and only asked

time to conclude my interview with the five men who had urged me to talk with Satan. I began to suspect that this was what McGammon did not wish me to do. Even in his presence, and in that brooding at-hand-ness of Satan, never entirely removed and more consciously apprehended than before, I found in these men's souls an attitude of concern which caused hope to leap strong within me. I saw the inner Wilkinson peeping out with an eagerness which almost forgot concealment, while Galpin and Godson received me gravely and earnestly, and poor Charlie Lovejoy clung to me almost piteously, pleading "Don't leave me, old faithful friend; if you must go anywhere, take me with you."

But McGammon was obdurate. "Pardon me if I suggest that I am master here," he said. "I have given you free leave to see many things. You will go alone with the guide I am calling."

I could only draw Lovejoy to me and whisper to him to tell the others that I would remain in part with them, and take up our talk when it could be unreserved. While speaking with Charley a strange soul-odor differentiated itself from hell's general mixture, and came more and more strongly upon me, with an unaccountable association of former days strangely sickening to my heart. I turned to become acquainted with my appointed guide.

It was Rorer.

McGammon noticed my start of discomfort and

remarked with some show of surprise, "I perceive that you have had some previous acquaintance with each other."

"The last time we met," I replied, "this man had it in his mind to kill me."

"What makes you think such a thing as that, Reverend?" Rorer asked.

"The threatening language you used as you strode toward me," I replied. "The reach for your revolver, whose handle was uncovered as your wrist pushed back your coat, the menacing letters which had come to me in the handwriting of your lady sympathizer, the reputation you bore, the opportunity of the time and place, and the indications that you had been waiting for me to pass."

"Then why didn't I go ahead and do it?" Rorer demanded.

"Because I turned my back, as Jeanie had advised me," I answered. "When you replied to my civil greeting as you did; I turned and led my horse into William's lane gate. If I had faced you a moment longer on that solitary piece of Mount Latitude road, I believe you would have seized your last opportunity for revenge; and then laid the blame upon me. When I turned my back you didn't dare to shoot me; knowing that the whole community was expecting you to do it. The very fear which my mare showed of you confirmed the moral certainty that it was you

who fired the two shots at me that dark Sunday night five months before, lodging the thirty-three caliber bullet into the back of my runabout seat. For Trolley had the scent of a dog, and showed a mortal terror at the report of a gun."

"Now Reverend," Rorer complained, "you wouldn't condemn a man on the queer actions of a horse?"

"May God forgive me if I wrong you, Elder," I answered; "but Trolley snorted as we passed you that dark night, and she gave the same snort, only more anxiously, as we passed the barn out of which you came that last Sunday afternoon. She wanted to run, and it was hard for me to turn her in to Elder Billy's gate. After opening the gate, I held her head with difficulty as you approached. And I hope you will try and bear with me as I tell you that your soul has a scent as perceptible and as alarming to mine, as the physical scent was only to my beast. I knew you by it now, after a separation of more than a century, and before we interchanged a thought."

Much of Rorer's overmastering influence in Mount Latitude had come, I often thought, from his facility in displaying either an imposing rage or an imperturbable dignity, and you never knew which it would be. At this grievous provocation, he chose to ignore my rudeness and replied calmly that he was there to serve me, and to do the

bidding of the Noble Grand. "Let us set out upon our enterprise," he said, "without spending further controversy upon by-gones."

I turned to McGammon, "Noble Grand Master," I said, "I fear this man. He is the only one I was ever afraid of in this way. My life was threatened once by a representative of your line of business during an anti-saloon campaign, and it caused me little anxiety; but this man really meant to kill me. He has a grudge against me. I object to him as a guide. Will you send me off alone in hell with a man who cherishes an unreasoning murderous purpose to do me harm."

"Reverend Sir," McGammon replied, "you came in here by your own desire, expressing the intention of looking for your brother. As I yielded to your solicitation in the first place; so now I am doing all in my power to facilitate your purpose. My time is very much taken up, and just now I have an urgent call to visit several subordinate lodges. I have no time to bring a succession of guides for your selection. If your nerve is weakening, you may go in the anti-chamber for a hundred years. There is no second alternative. You understood when you came in that there was no exit."

I turned away from them both to talk with the Master. "Thou knowest Lord," I said, "that I have never willingly injured Rorer. He freely joined with the other elders of Mount Latitude church in asking for the Presbytery's commission

to investigate things. I had no part in their deposing him from his eldership. When Rorer tried to kill his son-in-law with a poker, we gave him a chance to appear on trial before the session before we suspended him. I never gave him a hard word. I carried no weapon to defend my life from his threatened attack. Do not give me over into his hand now. Thou has been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, oh God of my salvation!"

"Fear him not," was the Master's answer, "there is no fiend in hell that can really harm you, except by leading you into sin. Go with him; do him all the good you can. But watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

It would be tedious to tell of all the orders and lodges we visited. Much as I had liked many of their individual members and approved of the general principle of human brotherhood and appreciated the value of their coöperative insurance, and realized the boyish imperative upon men of getting together for a good time; interesting myself in these lodges proved sometimes a rather wearisome part of my pastoral work; always excepting that of the Good Templars, where I could go with my wife, sleep through the ritual, and enjoy a rousing little temperance meeting during the time allotted for the "good of the Order." I missed Jeanie sadly now, and the motive of my search seemed so uncertain of realization. My

progress through the orders of Freemasons, Knights of Pythias, Red Men, Elks, Eagles, Patriotic Order of the Sons of America, United Workmen, Junior Mechanics, Sons of St. George, Knights of the Golden Girdle, the Royal Arcanum, Knights of Columbus, the American Protective Association, and, oh dear me! how many others with whom I had already some acquaintance, would have been but little better than a ten weeks' yawn; except for my interest in individual lodge-members, too many of whom, alas! I had known on earth. I began to suspect that the dignified and patient thoroughness with which Rorer assisted my search was helped by his complacency in seeing me do penance. "This seemed at times the part of my pastoral work on earth most worthy of that somewhat sardonic name," I acknowledged to him; "doing deference to these sublimely important organizations; and I had cherished the hope that when I got into eternity I might have a rest from them; but now it seems as though the greater part of hell's population had joined one or the other of them — only these orders themselves are many of them quite transformed, and diverted in effect from the very excellent motive each put forward on earth."

"You see Reverend," Rorer replied: "so many men are in hell without their wives, and they have so much time on their hands."

"But that doesn't explain why you joined," I objected; "for you wouldn't live with your

wife in Mount Latitude, and the other lady may, possibly, be here."

"The other one became converted over again, and never spoke to me for twenty years before she died," Rorer acknowledged gloomily. "I think the trouble began that night in the revival meeting when she sat with a row of her friends conversing together across the middle of the congregation, so that no one felt disposed to come forward, and finally you pointed your finger directly at her, and told her if she was disposed to go to hell herself, at least not to try to take others with her. That thing made her angry for ten years and gloomy for ten more. Then she went forward, one night, to the mourners' bench in the Methodist church at Lime Ridge, and got religion strong."

"Praise God!" I cried, "and now Elder, why don't you follow her example?"

"I did," he confessed, "but it didn't work; she never had anything more to do with me, and religion didn't stick to me any more than it did the other times."

"Perhaps you hadn't the right motive," I suggested. "Perhaps you were trusting in religion, rather than in Christ."

"A man requires appreciation and friendship. I took hold strong to exhort and pray; but the brethren and sisters withheld their confidence and their affection from me; and at last, I took to drink, to drown my sorrows."

"What a miserable old age you must have experienced!" I said compassionately.

"It ended in the poor-house," Rorer admitted.

"You must have been glad to breathe your last and have it all over," I reflected.

"For all that, I would give my eldership in hell just to be back at the Stone Bridge poor-house," he declared, "much more to begin life all over at Mount Latitude."

"I heard something of your eldership here," I acknowledged, "and I rather anticipated it before."

"I have been for years an elder in the Metropolitan Church of Millionaires' Corner," Rorer informed me sententiously.

"That seems strange," I mused, "if you died in the poor-house."

"Their wealth is only a memory," Rorer declared. "I could buy up the whole crowd for twenty-five cents. And I'm not the only one among them that came to the poor-house at last."

"Still the change of circumstances was not so great for you," I suggested. "You seemed to have no particular means of livelihood when I knew you, except your untoward hypnotism over one well-to-do family and its connections."

"I believe I have been distinguished in the Metropolitan church," Rorer declared; "because I am the only one among them that never lost money. Perhaps they enjoy having one of their number different for variety."

"And are you as faithful a church goer as in the old days at Mount Latitude," I asked.

"I never miss," was his answer.

This at once accounted to my mind for occasional seasons of abstraction when Rorer did not seem to be all of him with me in the lodge rooms. He was ever an inscrutable man; only to be perceived in part upon the surface; but since meeting him in hell, I had been impressed that he must be engaged upon some other, if kindred, enterprise simultaneously with that of conducting me. I did not fail to thank him for his disinterestedness in remaining, even in part, by my side, having other and distant matters to attend to. "And now Elder," I continued, "you must still have a form of godliness to occupy the exalted church position which is yours. This certainly seems in some respects a great advance from the eldership of our little Mount Latitude Church. And will you any longer deny the *power* of godliness? Will you not yield your heart entirely to the Christ of whom you could talk quite interestingly in former days?"

"It is entirely suitable for you to address me in this manner, Reverend," was Rorer's calm reply, "but you know that at heart, I am a consistent believer in the doctrine of the Millennial Dawn."

"I remember that this was one of the indictments against you as a Presbyterian elder at Mount Latitude, I answered. "And if you still

hold these views, I am interested to know how the Metropolitan Presbyterian Church of Millionaires' Corner, and your ecclesiastical peers in the Presbytery take your belief now. How do you square your belief with the teaching of the Shorter and longer Catechisms and with that of the Confession of Faith?"

"Those symbols contain my official belief," Rorer answered. "My private belief is in the Millennial Dawn."

"But how does your Presbytery like a man that has two sets of beliefs?" I asked. "And what do your ex-millionaire brothers think of your special private belief in the Millennial Dawn?"

"I might ask in return, what does your celestial presbytery think of your own special private belief that offers salvation to persons after they have died?" Rorer rejoined.

"The difference is," I replied, "that your belief, if I have a correct impression of it, antagonizes the fundamental principles of Calvinism, of evangelical Christianity and of common morality, while my belief in an aeonian redemption seems to complete and confirm them. I trust to remain in perfect accord with our presbyteries in heaven; as well as with our general assembly and church of the First Born."

"Damn your Calvinism!" exclaimed Rorer with sudden heat; "Damn your evangelical

Christianity! Damn your morality! I am looking forward to the Millennial Dawn."

"And how does that expectation help you?" I inquired curiously.

"Help me?" he exclaimed, "why I would go crazy without it. When the Millennial dawn comes we shall all be changed. We will be good and happy in a minute; or else some of us will stop being.

"Which would you rather?" I wondered.

"I don't much care," was his answer.

"Have you no incentive at all to live?" I cried. "Do you not often long to be all that God would have you?"

"I am that now, and always have been," was his answer.

"What!" I said, "has God ever wished you to be a wife-deserter, a despoiler, a murderer by frequent intention, if not in fact, a consummate scoundrel and hypocrite, a —"

"I have been what God made me to be," he replied, "and what I am and have been I am bound to be until the Millennium dawns. Then I shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trump sounds.

"Rorer!" I pleaded, "for Christ's sake who died to save you, for pity's sake upon your own soul, drop this awful stuff you have been thinking! The Millennial dawn will come for you the moment you cry to God for pardon. You do

not need to go on for ages as you have begun. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Turn! turn! for why will you die?"

"Reverend," Rorer answered, "you don't know me. You do not understand my complex nature. You never could, perhaps you never will. But before you are done with me sir, I calculate I'll give you something to think about a long while."

With this veiled threat, he closed our personal religious conversation, and we proceeded on our tour of the lodges.

As I said, my spirit was saddened by the recognition of old acquaintances. I found Windsor Lodge of Mill River, Sons of St. George still holding its sessions in Fourth Degree on Sunday morning at ten o'clock; though without accompanying potations from the beer keg, also still holding its monthly hop, only without its whiskey to mix with coffee for the women; but when we had passed quite through these all-too-familiar associations of Sons of This and Knights of the Other; we began to enter into a zone of organizations which really seemed to exist for something, while many of them possessed the charm of novelty also. My companion introduced me to a circle of Socialists; and I had to rub my eyes metaphorically and exclaim to myself, "Is this hell?" Like the early Christians they were having all things in common; only these were limited necessarily to things of the spirit. It was won-

derful to see how they had mitigated the tedium and chill of hell by their sedulous care in sharing every gleam of comfort, every vibration of heart warmth, in the endeavor to make a little glow of gladness spread and radiate over a large area of shivering, clinging life. In their midst I found relief from that rub of passing spirits, each bent on its own behoof, which had been my first intimation of the environment of hell. As I moved about among them, each one touched would go a little way with me in deference and interest. I found relief here also from the sameness of masculinity; for men and women spirits here mingled frankly, trustingly together, and told each other their inner thoughts. It was a woman spirit calling herself Anna Palvlovna who showed me perhaps the greatest consideration of them all, and patiently endeavored to explain the difference between themselves and us who are members of Christ's one eternal church; and in return I gave her some account of myself, and told her about Jeanie and Joy. She manifested a certain repulsion for Rorer, and he considerably left us to ourselves for awhile. "I cannot understand why I should find you and your circle here," I said. "He that loveth is born of God. You seem so out of place. Why do you not have your part with God's other dear children? You are a greater puzzle to me than all the other bewildering anomalies I have found in hell."

"Brother," she answered with engaging sim-

plicity, "not many of us socialists here believe in God, or in heaven, or in hell. We worship the great but imperfect God, humanity. To us that other conception of God seems to set the trend toward tyranny. How can you be a free man, while you tremble at the idea of a supreme being whose arbitrary will controls your destiny for eternity? How can you be untrammelled and heart free; to devote yourself to the welfare of your fellow men? Religion is the supreme selfishness. We cultivate a life that is above these narrow aims and interests — broader, sweeter gladder. Our heaven is not the goal of a sanctified individualism; but it is the realization of the supreme well-being of all, the dream of a golden future when socialism shall become as universal in the polity of this spirit world as it has already become on our dear old earth."

"You seem to have failed to notice one thing, Sister," I objected; "A varied, voluntary, free-souled kind of socialism has come to prevail on earth along with the essential triumph of Christianity, and because of it. It is all the work of Jesus the Nazarene."

A smile, half of admiration, half of pity, shimmered over the bright surface of Anna's soul.

"It is so perfectly natural that you should feel thus, Brother Nathaniel," she acknowledged. "All the thoughts of all your forefathers direct your own thoughts in this channel. Because the two causes have grown and prevailed on earth

together; it was inevitable that minds of your trend would attribute, the spread of practical socialism to the prevailing power of Christianity; while it is entirely evident to minds that think without the aid of hereditary counters; that Christianity has survived at all only by its accidental similarity to socialism and its skillful, if tardy, appropriation of socialist ideas. Ever since the crusades and the renaissance, the religion of Jesus has availed itself of the fortuitous advantage of association with the rising tide of humanism which we call the modern era. The successive triumphs of this humanistic principle have been naively vaunted as triumphs of the cross. And socialism, holding the future in its heart, has not delayed from point to point of its onward sweep to contend about issues already past. Its outlook has been broad enough to allow some lesser thoughts of narrower minds to go unchallenged; until from the roaring loom of time the pattern of man's destiny shall be unfolded in its completeness, and truth stand out too clear for argument."

"But Sister Anna," I protested in delight at finding a womanly mind ready for high themes, "how can you overcome the argument from priority and from overmastering influence which gives our Jesus all the glory? Is He not the world's first and greatest socialist, and humanity's truest brother? Does not His *magna charta* of equal Christian brotherhood give the complete ideal of

all that is excellent in modern terrestrial life? And is not His own completed law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself' being written to-day across the statute books of earth's nations, across the ledgers of her commerce, across the contracts of her industrial life? What other possible foundation principle is there for human brotherhood, but in the sonship of believers born again in Christ Jesus into the household of faith, the family of God? The true brotherhood of man, lost in the fall, is restored in forgiveness through Christ, accompanied by the spirit of adoption breathed into our hearts whereby we cry Abba Father."

"Your thoughts are earnest, Nathaniel," the woman admitted, "but oh! so amusingly child-like! Really you must admit that humanity, is one. All men are our brothers. There has never been any fall. The idea is so effete that I wonder at you for even referring to it. Man, as we have him to-day, is the product of continuous evolution. Every fall, even as Theodore Parker claimed, has been a fall upward. The process of development has been accelerated in certain races and individuals. So men here and there have stood out in advance of their age. The difference has cost these men martyrdom; but thus they have lit the beacon fires of progress, to light the pathway of advance for succeeding generations. Oh yes, we love Jesus, as we love Plato, Bellamy, Henry George, and Carl Marx — perhaps even

more than any of these; I have often wished to meet him, but he has never happened along in the spirit world. He was perhaps the most brotherly man that ever lived. But Jesus could have hardly claimed for himself all the divinity and saving power which your scriptures and your theologians ascribe to him. These ideas are Pauline, Johanne. They scarcely occur in the earlier gospels. They were part of the halo of exaggerated gratitude shed upon the memory of a great, kind soul which suffered deeply for its fellows. Jesus himself must be troubled about it, as we are sure the soul of his mother was troubled by the mistaken idolatry so long accorded her."

"Dear woman!" I replied, "an analogy is not an argument. If Christ had not in life and deed have proved Himself so unmistakably divine; no one would ever have thought of paying *quasi* divine homage to His mother. The world's history and the experience of many millions prove Him to be God our Saviour. The miracle of redemption, while it dwarfs all those of which the New Testament writers tell us, even that of his resurrection, compels our belief in these as necessary incidents of His introduction to the world. Yet you may put all these aside for the moment if you wish. Himself is His greatest miracle. Oh if you only knew Jesus Himself! Not just His character and mission revealed in His word, but His living presence which is here and everywhere. You said you wondered why you had never met Him in this

spirit world, and here He is right by our side."

"What a beautiful delusion!" the woman exclaimed. "I even wish that I might be held by it too."

"'Then shall ye know,'" I quoted, "'if ye follow on to know the Lord.' And would you really like to be a Christian!" I added eagerly.

"For the yearning of a woman's heart, indeed I would," she answered. "And would you not also like to be a socialist? Then there would be nothing between us in our friendship, would there?"

"I am a socialist" I acknowledged. "Heaven is all socialism."

"Then if you are a socialist already," she said, "I will give you the sacred kiss of fellowship, and I will try and learn to be a Christian."

It seemed very sweet to be so trusted. My heart also was unspeakably lonely for fellowship. And beside I reasoned eagerly of what might be accomplished by joining this circle toward winning to Christ the finest souls I had met in hell. I fear emotion was fast overmastering judgment and principle. Our souls had almost met when the whisper of the Master came to me saying, "Beware!" Instantly I remembered what the Satana had said about kissing full-blooded men to sleep. I looked again deep into the warm, palpitating soul of the woman, and began to realize that there was more of her than I had hitherto been aware of, or than I could yet discern — only

far within the azure depths of her nature I discovered a second soul cuticle, and upon it, to my dismay and horror, eight little callosities in two rows, as if worn by the handle of a spade.

"Temptress!" I exclaimed, recoiling.

A little spasm of contraction passed through her, and the callous spots disappeared; otherwise it was wonderful to see how well she maintained her character, and showed just the right proportions of surprise, reproach, wistfulness. "Do you not really wish then to be one of our circle?" she asked.

"I fear to," I stammered.

"Your Bible says there is no fear in love," she reasoned. "Why will you spurn ours? Let us love you, and you may be able to teach us many things."

"Anna," I replied; "since you wish to be called by that name; as I look into your soul I see something which frightens me. Whether it is a reflection from somewhere, or whether I am looking through a lens which brings near a view of something far away, I cannot tell. I see a dark place that is like a charnel house where men are dead while they still live. They quiver in and out like worms, and one now and then reaches up painfully, blindly almost back to life; only to fall back again into the quaking, piteous mass. If I should let you kiss me, something tells me it would be for the death. You would enswathe me in your greater bulk and endeavor to suck out

reason, purpose, manhood all that makes me truly alive. Woman! Devil! when will you give up this ghoulisn trade? Can you not see that my Paraclete will not let you take me by surprise? You are blood-famished, crazy, mad with crime. Oh if you would only let Christ dissolve that spell; what a grand force for God you might be! Poor creature! you lurk for souls without even the excuse or the faculty of hating. Won't you give it all up, and let Jesus save you, as you have just pretended you were half inclined to do?"

But she answered still in character, "You talk so strangely now, Brother. You seem to take me for someone else. I hope you will be like your first self when we meet again."

CHAPTER XVI

Rorer reappeared with surprising suddenness after the Satana — if it were truly she — had vanished. Indeed the stealthy scent of him was on the air of hell around me even before my interview with the woman had ended. This promptness, coupled with a curious disappointed manner he showed, led me to suspect an understanding between them. Indeed suspicion seemed the one faculty demanded by my situation; and I felt that weakest aptitude of my nature strained beyond its reach. I sighed more than ever for Jeanie, who had ever manifested such a faculty for sizing people up promptly. Jeanie used often to declare that I could never see through people, especially nice looking women, and that any clever woman could manage me completely; but I would sometimes reply that I found it ever so much pleasanter just to take people on their face value; even if I could not idealize and mark them up a little above par. Such inflation of the currency of appreciation could not bankrupt me, so long as God had placed with me such a deposit of true gold in the person of Jeanie herself. I had never felt quite so incomplete without her, as now. The heavy air of hell was telling on me. A feeling akin to shame and contrition pressed me down. A new problem in the evangelization of hell had suddenly confronted me. Could there be a possible danger

for the heaven's missionary himself of succumbing to its insidious influences, falling the quarry of some unexpected shaft of temptation, and thus dismally augmenting the population of perdition from which he had hoped to win others to the Saviour? I thought of that moment when the supposed Anna Pavlovna was about to welcome me into the circle. The friendship offered had seemed almost too sweet. Then with the sudden seeming revelation of a death-trap in the offered kiss had come a revulsion of feeling, a blush I could feel upon my own soul's forehead, and from which I could find no relief except in earnest prayer for a heart kept pure. Could those who had seen God's face, who had been sealed with His name upon their forehead, ever again actually fall into sin?

The thought caused me such shuddering, that I went on with elder Rorer, stepping carefully for fear of pitfalls, and losing, perhaps, thereby some of the interest of the organizations to which he introduced me. I could see little use in looking for Harry among Clans McAlpine, Clans NaGael, Clans McCracker, McGinnis, the Ancient order of Hibernians, the Mafia, an order of Martians, and another from the planets of Sirius. Still less did I really expect to find him among various infidel clubs to which my guide next brought me; for Harry had never seemed capable of two thoughts on either side of any theological proposition. To me the most interesting one of these

clubs for its own sake was one which called itself the "Anti Immortality Society." Curious to hear what arguments could be adduced against that continued existence which we were all actually experiencing; I stopped to listen to one of their debates. The question was put in a negative form; viz; "Resolved that there is no future life," and the first speaker upon the affirmative of this proposition adduced the argument that it was simply impossible to conceive of a disembodied existence for the human soul. "All the mental activities of which science could take cognizance from infancy to old age," he declared, "were absolutely conditional upon brain activity. When the nerves went absolutely to sleep, the so-called soul of man practically ceased to exist; if we accept the dictum of philosophy that being is activity. How then can death, by any possibility, be anything more than an eternal sleep? How can the identity of a spirit be preserved with no form of physical life upon which to fasten it? How could there be any communication between it and other spirits?"

To these questions, one who had been appointed to uphold the negative side of the debate replied, somewhat perfunctorily, that there was still a *tertium quid*, a possible means of compassing immortality; and while his distinguished protagonist had clearly set forth the unthinkableness of a continued existence for the soul of man independent of his body; there was still the alternative

left that a new embodiment might in some manner be achieved or affected, either by a transmigration, a resurrection, or the adhesion of the soul to some more ethereal type of protoplasm, adapted better to sustain its activities and to broaden their scope.

But the second speaker on the affirmative side now contended in rebuttal that the moment of transfer for the soul from one body to another, however infinitesimally brief that moment might be conceived to be, would be one of practically independent disembodied existence; and therefore an entire impossibility and inconceivability, as had been succinctly proven by his colleague in opening the debate.

Thus the second speaker on the negative side had really no ground left to stand upon. He could only feebly inquire by what explanation his confreres of the affirmative were prepared to meet the apparent phenomena of their own present situation. "We seem to have no bodies, parts or passions," he declared; "at least of a physical order. And yet here we are, apparently, very much to our own surprise, living on, remembering well the details of our mortal existence down to the moment of disollution; the moment when our moribund circulation of blood ceased to sustain consciousness, and parting the heavy curtains of futurity, the essential self of each of us passed into this which some call the spirit world. We

still say, each to himself, ‘ *Ego sum* ’: ‘ This is I.’ We perceive without senses, and we converse without words. We recognize each other at the first approach and greet one another across the universe.”

“ It is not for me,” he continued, “ but for the wiser minds upholding the affirmative of this proposition to explain these anomalies. I cannot advance them in argument; for all argument on this question was successfully closed by the last speaker. I simply place them before your august minds as worthy, at least, of passing interest, if not of careful scientific investigation.”

Thus challenged, the men of the affirmative brought forth two such profound explanations of continued soul life as to overpower questioning by their very ingenuity. One contended that brain life continued for a time in a ghost body, so ethereal as to be past perception, yet sufficiently physical to be in touch with the universe. “ We were never conscious of our own brain material,” he explained, “ and we only learned of our own bodies by the education of the senses and of the judgment during early life.” The second speaker thought that mental activity might continue for a period by virtue of the momentum imparted to it before dissolution from the body. “ As in the hallucinations of starving men,” he said, “ or the remarkable visions reported by those who have spent some time in a state of coma, so

consciousness may flicker above the wick of the expiring brain for a little while before it too passes into nothingness."

Both agreed strongly in calling attention to the exact form of resolution which they were debating, viz: that there was no future life, and made it quite plain that whatever might be the appearance of things in their present condition, absolutely unanswerable arguments had been brought forward to convince all minds present that it could not be real or lasting, so that all might wait the rapidly approaching moment when oblivion would claim its own, and life's fitful dream be rounded by eternal sleep. The speakers upon the negative side were thus left with nothing more to advance, and the appointed judge of the debate formally declared that it had been won by those of the affirmative. Thereupon the resolution, as originally put, was passed by the members of the society without a dissenting voice, and the exercises for the time being would have closed with an adjournment *sine die* (in consistency with their reassured conviction that they were none of them likely to exist much longer in order to reassemble), if the president of the society had not suggested that it would be much more pleasant to remain in session for the brief time probably yet allotted them to live, and to throw the meeting open for such comforting reflections as might be profitably brought forward by any who felt so disposed. Thereupon there

came a pause in the meeting so long and so dismal that I was forcibly reminded of some of our Christian Endeavor prayer meetings in Colby. The president finally remarked with some embarrassment and with evident reluctance that they found themselves honored by the presence of two visitors, and should either of these gentlemen find himself strongly disposed to make a few remarks in the few moments still left to them before the meeting must close perforce by the stroke of the hour of extinction, he was at liberty to express himself as he saw fit. Thus encouraged, and finding Rorer dumb, I thought I would make an effort to be civil, at least, and say something. So, with a heart's cry to God for help to put some saving truth before their bigoted minds, I ventured to call their attention to one omission noticeable throughout the course of their debate. "Gentlemen," I said, "I too have wondered over the inconceivableness of the spirit life, both before and after I came to die. I have been puzzled to know how the soul of man apparently continues to exist without activity in the body's deepest, dreamless sleep. I have seen the flame of consciousness smothered slowly out in forms that were dear to me, and while the brave heart kept on beating and the loud breath came and went for days and nights of the death coma, I have asked myself over and over, 'how can there be any soul independent of this stiffening clay?' I have died myself, even as you. I knew for days

that I was dying: I said good-by to my dearest. I spoke to them of a meeting beyond, which would have seemed almost incredible to myself, judging only from my physical sensations. Consciousness came fitfully between intervals of dreamless sleep: each seeming, as it overpowered me, to be the last sleep of death. Last of all, I was artificially rallied back to life by a mere drug — just for one kiss upon my lips, a speechless glance of love from my own eyes into the loving face bent over mine, and I took the plunge into rayless depths.

Then came the new life. I could not understand it at all. But then which of us could really understand one moment of the mortal life? It has been all joy and wonder for over a hundred years.

“But gentlemen,” I said, “I seem to have one factor in the equations of this gigantic problem to which none of you in your debate has given its proper place. It is the one great Known Quantity without which — I should say without Whom — all our calculating, though it were chalked over the scroll of space, ends about where it began. I have GOD. Your debaters spoke in scientific phrase of brain action supporting consciousness in the mortal life; but what, may I ask, was brain action or any other physical phenomenon, but a little part of the life of God? What we call matter is only an unknown something or Someone, which we are compelled to think as ex-

isting to be the substratum of motion; for all physical qualities, color, taste, sound, resistance, heat, chemical properties, and the like, are forms of motion and betray a Force, a Life not our own or any other man's, but God's force, God's life alone. When the brain dies, God does not die. He simply passes my soul life from one hand to the other and supports it still. In Him we live and move and have our being. On earth it was by means of life blood renewing nerve and brain. Here the thing is more directly, hardly more wonderfully, done. Brain action was only one little form of God-action. This has never stopped and never will. Supported by this inexhaustible world's power plant, this uncheckable world's dynamo, the current of your thought and of mine flows on just so long as God wills it so.

"Gentlemen," I concluded, "it still seems almost incredible that the soul can live without the body, but that is only our short-sighted perception of the basal fact that the soul cannot live without God. As sure as God is God, thought cannot die, love cannot die, conscience cannot die. The very questions you ask prove you to be immortal. Our questioning, our incompleteness show God's plan so far from being worked out in any of our lives, that we need not have one thought of an end while that sure eternal plan and decree are still unrealized. Our unbounded capacity for growth demands eternity, for its process. The one thing alone you and I have

to dread is that for a moment or an aeon, we should not be growing as God wills."

I might have said a good deal more, for after the supreme effort of assurance in getting started to address such an unwilling audience, the zest of stirring things made it hard to stop. But just at this point the president of the society interrupted me and gravely but firmly gave me the reminder that the question on which I was essaying to speak had been positively passed upon by the decision of their appointed judge of the debate, and by the unanimous vote of their members, and consequently at the risk of seeming discourtesy to a visitor, he found himself reluctantly compelled to rule my remarks out of order.

I protested that I had heard him call for comforting reflections, and had been endeavoring to furnish those.

He replied with dignity and firmness, not un-mixed with asperity, that the comfort asked for was for those firmly convinced of their approaching extinction, and that it could afford no comfort to confuse the mind with a jumble of maudlin nonsense.

Rorer now also spoke, apologizing for my line of address, and suggesting that it was time for us to be going on. He said that it seemed to him highly unbecoming for an outsider to be letting off his crude flights of fancy there, and interrupting the philosophical calm of a society of thinkers steadyng each other to meet the con-

clusion of their existence. In fact he intimated plainly that he was ashamed of me, and so by dint of their pushing and his pulling I found myself separated from their assembly with no proof of good accomplished, and found myself going on with a somewhat heavier heart, to see what stranger kind of people hell might hold.

How much further our progress might have continued I cannot tell, but it was interrupted by an approach which filled me with surprise and pity, while it evidently caused Rorer great annoyance. It was his youngest daughter, a child of ten or twelve years when I had last seen her on earth.

"The brat! she haunts me," Rorer exclaimed.

"I should think you would be glad to have her come," I mused. "She seemed strangely wistful for your affection when she would come to Sunday school, or meet you at the little church."

"Yes, and when she died by hanging herself from the beam of the barn about six months after you left Serenity, people generally blamed it on me."

This was shocking news indeed. I wondered how our correspondents could have kept it from us, or how Jeanie and I could have failed to take knowledge of such an event after coming to heaven. I remembered well the great dark eyes of the child, the shadow that was never lifted from her face, her hesitation to believe anything

glad. I could well understand how she might have brooded over her mother's sorrow, until some grey day, after one of her father's terrible visits, living may have seemed almost more than the child could bear. She came to us now, her soul shivering as if from cold, but her father received her with a manner to chill her even more. "Oh Father!" she said, "I have looked for you so long! Father, I am so lonely!"

"What do I care how lonely you are!" Rorer exclaimed; "I'd like to know how you came in here anyway."

The child's distress was pathetic beyond description. Often at Mount Latitude my heart would go out to her with an ache of pity, but then she did have some home life. Now she was alone in hell, and still a child in soul, strangely undeveloped amid the meagerness of perdition.

"Maggie," I said, "do you know me?"

"I know you, because you are sorry for me," she said. "Mr. Prester, can't you get Papa to be kind to me once more?"

"My poor little girl!" I replied, "can you still remember all that we told you in the Sabbath school about your other, your Heavenly Father, and how He is always trying to be kind to you?"

"But you know it isn't true really," she replied.

"It is as true as the worlds and the stars. It is true as the buttercup yonder in the meadow.

I know because God has been so kind to me. He has given me all my dear home folks and we live together in this great, wonderful universe everywhere at home, for everywhere we are together is heaven."

"How can I know?" she asked. "He never was kind to me."

"Dear Maggie," I answered, "God wants you to give him your heart so that He can be kind to you and make up for everything. I believe He would like you to come away with me to heaven. Your mother is there and many of your old schoolmates. I know He wants you and me to pray together for your poor father here —"

At this point Rorer interrupted me with a horrible oath. "None of that, you snivelling hypocrite!" he cried. "Trying to get my daughter to go away with you somewhere, and then both of you pretend to pray for me!"

"Oh Father!" Maggie cried, with a gleam of hope brightening the surface of her sorrowful soul, "do you really care if I should go away? Father, I will never leave you if you will love me!" She made a timid effort to embrace him.

Rorer swore at her in a slow, deliberate, heart-chilling way, struck her a blow of resentment, and spurned her with a kick of hate. "You and this hypocrite set the community against me," he complained. "You hung yourself and left everybody to blame me for it. I don't care where you go, or who you go with, or what becomes of

you, so you never let me see your cursed ghost again."

This was where Satan took me off my guard. A sensation rose within me which I had not experienced in all heaven's years. God forgive me! I became angry with Rorer. An impulse of what seemed righteous indignation came upon me, and before I realized it, or had taken time to pray, a keen joy of resentment toward the father, mingled with passionate pity for the child tingled through every fibre of my being. Patience, I felt, had ceased to be a virtue. Strong, self-restraint was cast aside with a dangerous exultation at being morally free to show the man what I thought of him. I forget the example of Michael the archangel. I tremble still, as I remember how I felt. Rorer's child was slipping away, crushed, desolate, stunned by her sorrow. I drew her to me and turned to face the creature who stood to her for a father, with an impulse to shake him out of his soul's wicked skin.

"You unspeakable brute!" I exclaimed.

At that moment something cracked and gave way beneath me. I seemed to fall a great distance, inhaling hot flame, and with walls narrowing upon me as I fell. At last I struck ground painlessly, as in a nightmare. The surroundings of the universe were unchanged, Rorer and the girl were still with me, but all else was terribly different, for I had become a part of hell. I was not only in hell, but hell was getting into me.

Rorer had noted my catastrophe and leaped upon me in rage and exultation. I never knew a man who could work up anger to such imposing proportions. "Curse you!" he cried. "My hour has come. Now I have you where I can handle you. You are the man that plotted and schemed until you deprived me of my eldership. You put me out of the church. All the people in the county knew about it. You lowered me before everybody. You robbed me of the friendship of the woman I loved. It was you who said, the first time you took dinner with us at her mother's house, that if we really loved each as brother and sister, we ought, for love's sake, to separate and never have anything to do with each other any more. And it was you that denounced her in your meeting and drove the dread of hell into her heart, which led to her conversion twenty years after, and then she never would have anything to do with me any more. Haven't I got something to settle with you, you scented pharisee, you sanctified humbug, you smirking angel, you Jesuit, you scheming persecutor, you seducer of little girls from their parents, you cloaked religionist, you hell tramp, nosing into the secrets of orders to which you don't belong?"

So he went on heaping invective and taunt upon me, stinging me with the repeated thrust of his malice, with the expectation no doubt of bringing me to retaliate and thus of dragging me deeper down.

But a more powerful emotion protected me. The dread of losing heaven, and of forfeiting God's love had swept over my soul, damping the fire of anger. The feeling of shame, novel because so long unknown, bowed me down almost below the capability for resentment. How could I ever meet Jeanie and Joy and mother in heaven now? I had been vulgarly angry: I had used an epithet. Those blessed women seemed ten times further away than they had before after all these weary weeks of exploration into the remote remainders of hell. Worst of all I could no longer lay hold of God. It seemed strangely difficult to pray, and the din Rorer was making confused all my thoughts. Perhaps this was a part of his purpose, for he seemed to be helped in it by numberless grueome creatures of whose activity around me in hell I had never before been so conscious. Imps and fiends gaped and snarled about me. Owl-like shadows flitted back and forth snapping hungry beaks. Teeth were being gritted, serpent rattles shaken, claws sharpened. Scaly folds crawled slowly across me, fangs scratched me, forked tongues shot in and out touching me, great jaws yawned across my soul and cold, slimy things began to suck at me. The nearing yap of hungry pursuers came to my hearing, and a sickening vulturine odor mingled with Rorer's hyena scent. Look where I would, red eyes gleamed in the darkness, stealthy forms crouched and stalked about.

I felt the necessity of facing every way at once, and with a sickening of the heart, I began to acknowledge to myself that I was afraid. A strange lassitude was creeping over me. All these weeks and months of hell must have told upon me more than I had realized. I did not feel equal to the struggle which was upon me. So many decades had passed by since I had known the sensation of weariness; the strangeness of it frightened me. I cried to God in desperation, but there was such confusion within, as well as about me; I could not feel sure that He heard me in acceptance of my prayer. Then a stranger thing still happened. From the far distance came an angel — at first only just a luminous speck of mild radiance, then disclosing as it came nearer the form and the benignancy of a beautiful mother spirit. The tumult seemed to abate around me at her approach. Even Rorer railed less impressively.

I remember wondering why an angel had been sent to succor me, when I so sorely felt the need of Jesus Himself. Then I thought of how it is written that when our Lord was agonizing in the garden an angel appeared comforting Him. But I was in such distress, and so overmastered with foes, that like a drowning man grasping at straws, I was disposed to avail myself of the first succor offered. And before I had really taken time to reflect upon this rather ignominious and uncertain line of retreat, I found myself enfolded in

the shimmering radiance of the wonderful mother angel which shut out noise and perturbation as with silken curtains fold on fold. I felt that I was being lifted and borne away, away: I found it hard to care whither. A delicious drowsiness was coming over me. I had not felt the approach of such sleep for the whole reach of spirit life. In heaven here we have intervals of relaxation, when for very fullness of joy and peace the soul remits its eager activities just to nestle for awhile contentedly into the bosom of infinite love. But the influence I found wrapping me in at this time in hell was more like the sleep of exhaustion, as I had known it back in the earthly life. Under its spell effort even of thought grew dull; concern for the future and the past alike seemed hardly worth while. Like a weary child folded to the deep breast of its mother, I was sinking to rest without a care. A lullaby, soft as the note of a cuckoo, crooned in the cadence of the angel mother's voice. Her caress was like the light passing of a mesmeric hand across my soul. She seemed to have not a single reproach to give me for the waywardness of my outburst of anger against poor Rorer. It seemed already a long, long time since it had happened. All that had led up to it seemed to have transpired weeks and months ago. The retrospect was becoming blurred as upon slowly closing eyelids, and the heaven-life itself seemed so far away, so unreal, as hardly to repay the effort of remembering it

any more. There was indeed an undercurrent of uneasiness and dissatisfaction in my mental state, like that with which the brain reluctantly yields to the power of some soporific drug. The angelic being who had thus unexpectedly taken me in charge, herself encouraged me with a tenderness that was almost more than motherly. "My poor tired boy," she said, stooping as if to give me a good-night kiss, "this temptation was more than you could be expected to bear. How could anyone help being provoked with Rorer?"

A moment more, and the kiss of spirits would have been given me; but these words of suggested reproach upon providence roused me to a partial consciousness of something going wrong, and looking, even with glazing sight, I saw close beside me upon the cuticle of this great, soft, enfolding soul, as though it were upon a hand about to be laid playfully upon my eyes, the callous spots of a digger of graves. Like one struggling with a nightmare, I began endeavoring to wrench myself free; but the soft arms of the other's soul clung around me like the tentacles of an octopus. Instead of floating upward as it had at first seemed, I realized that I was being drawn downward swiftly toward inky depths, and that the embrace which had seemed so restful was in reality drawing away my strength and deadening every faculty of resistance. Like a drowning man, I thought of a thousand things at once: of what it would mean to those who loved me,

should I never come back to heaven, of the reproach brought upon the name of a redeemed and blood-washed soul dragged down to living death by yielding to the embrace of a goddess Devi, of the slow pains of eternal dissolution to a soul that is supurating at the raw ends of all its nerves throughout impotent ages in the charnel house of hell. I thought of all the souls in whose salvation I had become interested here in hell and of the millions of still more active minds to whom, if I had kept true to God, I might have gone as the herald of a new hope in Christ. Then with the revulsion of an unspeakable horror rallying my failing force, I strove once again to push away from the livid bosom of this great ghoul of souls in whose clutch I was being dragged to living entombment. Alas! my strength single-handed and devitalized, was as nothing to hers. The vastness of her bulk enveloped, blinded, overweighed me. The folds which had so smoothly slipped about me tightened and clung as with a million roughened scales, while I struggled to be free. Overmastered by the sheer power of a tremendous, wicked will, and half swooning in my despair, I was drawn downward still.

CHAPTER XVII

Then conscience and the better soul awoke with a start. I no longer cried for succor, but for forgiveness. I cannot think now how I began to pray, only I told God over and over that I was so sorry. "Oh, I cannot find Thee!" I cried, "and I need God so much! If I must be lost, still let me love Thee. Surely there is no deep in hell which Thy love has not sounded. Punish me as I deserve; only let me keep on loving Thee. I am so sorry! so sorry! Help me to show it in the tomb of dead souls. Help me to shout even into their dulled hearing that God loves them, and there is hope. Oh God, forgive this poor Santana who has captured me! She is Thy child too, God's poor lost child. Don't free me from her, if I can keep on trying to save her. God bless my dear girl at home in heaven! God bless all the people who love me there. Help them to wait patiently until I can come back, and maybe bring Mrs. Guinness with me. Oh forgive her, and save her, for the sake of the Saviour who died for her too. She doesn't really know what she is doing, and I'm so sorry for her! I'm sorry for poor Elder Rorer and his little girl. God save them. Oh God, save us all! Make us all sorry we ever got started going wrong."

Almost as I began to pray for her, the she-devil's hold relaxed. Thus encouraged I contin-

ued pleading for her salvation in tenderest pity. I remembered that she had told me no one had ever addressed her personally on that subject, and I argued her case with God that perhaps it had been only for the lack of positive Christian influence and by the turning of some hair of destiny that she had chosen the evil path instead of developing into a power for righteousness. "Few women," I argued with him, "ever deliberately, intentionally, and maliciously turn to a life of shame. It is almost always brought about by some trap in which they are weakly caught, some flame in which they giddily singe the moth-wings of the soul. Oh my Master," I pleaded, "surely the grace which made something of me could save and make glorious use of her. Save her, Lord; strike conviction into her heart; confuse her utterly with womanly shame, the birth pang of a true woman's soul. Open her sight to Jesus dying for her sin, and help her to believe that God loves her too, and will save her, if there is power in omnipotence to do it." So I continued in prayer, perhaps for an hour, perhaps several days, and when I could think of nothing more to say, I looked about and the fiend-woman was gone; the suns were shining almost brightly through the angry haze of hell, and in my own heart was the unutterable peace of a soul newly forgiven.

Trembling to turn one way or the other in leaning to my own understanding, I cried more earnestly than I had yet prayed in hell,—“Lord,

what will Thou have me to do?" With a bounding heart I heard His gracious whisper close beside me, saying, "Bring the child," and the next moment I found myself again beside little Maggie Rorer. To my great relief her father was not there. I think it must have been about this time that he became wholly absorbed in my father's trial before the presbytery of perdition on the charge of heresy. At any rate, he had left his child alone again within the dreary labyrinth of the arcanum of lodges, where I found her, shivering with loneliness and dread. She was about to flee from me, as from a ghost's ghost, when I approached, but I beckoned to her cheerily, and she waited for me in a hesitating, timid way. "Maggie," I said to her, "I want you to come away with me, by God's forgiveness and help, to meet your mamma in heaven."

"But you know there isn't any heaven really," the child answered.

I asked her if she had ever known me to deceive her, and she acknowledged that I had not about other things. "But you know they hired you for a minister in Mount Latitude," she argued, "and they paid you to talk about heaven and 'God so loved,'" and all the rest of it. There never was anything to show that it was really true."

"But Maggie," I replied, "since those days I have died and been in heaven, and I remember meeting your mother there once or twice. She

was not so sorrowful there all the time; but when I saw her, she was like a young girl again, happy and light hearted, only I remember she still had a wistful look; I suppose it must have been because she was thinking now and then of you."

"I would like to see my mother look young and happy," the child answered again, "but it sounds too much like a Sunday school lesson out of the Bible. If there really is a heaven, and people are truly happy there, and you were happy too, why did you ever come away?"

"I only came to hell for a little while," I replied; "just to look for some of God's waifs like you."

"But if you are so good and kind sure enough," the child questioned doubtingly, "why did you get mad at Father and call him a brute, and then go tumbling down in that strange way? What made you turn him out of the Mount Latitude church anyway?"

Her questions confused and discouraged me. "Holy Spirit," I prayed, "show me how to lead this poor lost child to Jesus. She doubts me and there is little I can say for myself, after what she has seen of my conduct lately. I cannot say anything to turn her heart away from her father. I believe she would rather wander around after him in hell, than go to the mother in heaven, on whose face she never saw a smile. Thou hast told me to bring the child, and I could not bear anyway to leave her here; yet she will not believe

anything good I tell her. I can do nothing with her, and unless Thou wilt work some wonderful change in her poor little heart; here I stick; but hopefully. In the meantime, Wilkinson and Lovejoy are needing me, as I perceive, more than ever, and there are Galpin, and Godson, and Willoughby, and oh, so many thousand and million others who just must be saved."

It was at that moment that I received my new baptism as a soul-winner in hell. It came over me, with deep contrition, that I had been going about the King's business in a diletante, will-if-I-can, lackadaisical way, more like a summer tourist, or Congressional committee of investigation, than as God's fireman snatching perishing souls as brands from the burning. It came over me with tremendous urgency that the King's business was demanding haste, even more in hell, with its myriad appeal of passing opportunity, than on earth with its narrower range of helpful soul-contact. So at that moment God charged my listless soul with a power of desperation to save, and save quick, trusting in Him alone to turn on the current of saving power every time I pressed the button of believing prayer. I turned again to Rorer's child, and I do not really think it was so much what I said to her now, as it was the God-given longing and determination to tear her soul out of Satan's net that did the work. "Maggie," I said, "God wants me to bring you away to heaven. You must come. Bow your soul here by my

side and let me teach you what to say to your Saviour."

The child's will yielded. Hesitatingly, wonderingly, but with increasing solemnity, she joined the current of her thought with mine in prayer. Presently she ceased to tremble so piteously. She nestled closer to my side and the voice of her soul grew stronger. Suddenly she stopped with a little gasp of surprise and of gladness. "Oh Mr. Prester!" she exclaimed, "I see Jesus! I know He is real now, for I see Him. He is right here by us in hell."

I was silent for joy. Again she spoke with a sob melting from longing into ecstasy. "I see Mamma!" she exclaimed, "ever and ever so far away, but oh! in such a bright place! and she does look different; but I believe she is praying too. I wonder if she is praying for me?"

"Maggie," I asked, when I could speak for gladness, "will you give yourself all to Jesus now, and come away with Him and with me to heaven, where your Mamma is praying?"

"It is so kind for you and Jesus to want me," she answered. "Yes, I will keep close between you, and I won't let anybody in hell pull me away."

Poor little girl! Her resolution was soon to be tested. As we went along together linked in dear hope, she asked me over more than once, "Do you think God will forgive me forever for hanging myself? It was so wrong, and I am

so sorry ; but oh, I was miserable when I did it ! ”

“ Talk to Jesus yourself about it, ” I counseled her at last.

I let her pray just for herself, and did not seek to enter into the privacy of her communion with the Master. At last she turned to me with a soul that was radiant even in its awe. “ He answered me ! ” she exclaimed. “ I spoke to Jesus and He spoke back to me ! And all these terrible years I have been believing there wasn’t really any such person ! ”

“ What has Jesus said to you ? ” I asked wonderingly.

“ He told me that He died for poor suicides too, ” the girl replied. “ He said I could love Him that much more, and He told me He had a great, great errand for me to do, to prove I love Him. Brother Prester, ” she whispered, “ I believe Jesus is going to let me be the one to save poor Father. ”

I thought it very likely, for surely no one else still loved Rorer as she did. I still sniffed the air of hell for dread of his scent tracking us, as we went on, and as I told her of the two men who were wishing and calling for me, back in Mystery lodge.

“ How did the girl get in here ? ” was the first question Wilkinson asked. It was only the outside Wilkinson which seemed to be there at first.

“ I hardly know how she worked her way inside the area of lodges, ” I answered. “ They say love laughs at bounds, and it was her despairing

love for her father that drew her to the spot where we met."

"But how did she get into Freemasonry? Women and girls are not allowed here."

"That's so!" I exclaimed. "I had entirely overlooked and forgotten about that. It must be all my fault. We came in the back way this time, so to speak, you know, and I really cannot tell you how I got in myself. My guide had attended to all the details of pass-words and signals in our progress from lodge to lodge, and he isn't with us now. I guess the child and I just came, that's all. God must have opened the way, without any thought about it on our part."

"You can never, either of you, get out alive," Wilkinson declared anxiously. "It is death to intrust the secrets of Freemasonry to a female."

"She will get out," I declared stoutly, "and so will I, and so will you, just when God calls us out."

Then the inner Wilkinson peeped out, a visage grown old with sorrow. "God will never call me out of here," he said. "I have sinned against the Holy Ghost."

Then he was about to disappear behind the other Wilkinson, but I made a grasp of sympathy to hold him. "Dear Philip," I said, "I have lately passed through an experience of falling into sin which almost brought me to think the same terrible thought, but God is rich in mercy

and He is trying me again. He will do the same for you."

"I don't believe you did it on purpose, Dominie," Wilkinson declared. "Don't the Book say that if we sin wilfully, after that we have received a knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries?"

"Now Brother," I exclaimed, "you are going to suspect me beforehand that I will do my best to explain away the force of your text; but I would like to tell you, half the bugaboos in the New Testament come from not understanding the Greek. I happen to have had a talk with Priscilla herself about her Epistle to the Hebrews, and what she really wrote was, if we *are sinning* wilfully after that we have received a knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sins. Of course not, there never was but the one. There is none other name but that of Jesus given under heaven among men, whereby, if saved at all, we must be saved. And for the man who is in that state of wilful sin against the truth of salvation of which he has received the knowledge, the man who has trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace, there is no hope in looking for some other Saviour.

There is nothing for him but sore punishment and fearful expectation, until he gets back, like Peter, to the dying Saviour whom he has denied, and whom he has even crucified afresh, and put Him to an open shame."

"But doesn't Priscilla say that it is impossible to renew such backsliders again to repentance?" Wilkinson persisted.

"With men this is impossible," I quoted, "but with God all things are possible. He has done it with you, brother. You are already deeply repentant. And let me assure you, however dark these passages in God's Word may seem to you, they certainly do not apply to any man who is in a state of genuine heart-sorrow for sin. This, in itself, proves that the man is not reprobate but that he is under the strong reclaiming influence of the Holy Spirit of grace."

But Wilkinson had one more objection. "Doesn't John say that there is a sin unto death, and we mustn't pray for that," he asked.

"No, he says, 'I do not say that he shall pray for it,'" I answered. "I fear brother, that you have your knowledge of the scriptures from going steadily to church, rather than from reading the Bible for yourself. Even the Beloved Disciple may have hesitated to tell us that we may pray for the sin of apostasy, but the very fact that he doesn't dare to tell us not to pray for it opens a little door of hope, it seems to me, even into hell itself, and when our Lord himself says of the sin

against the Holy Spirit that it shall not be forgiven men, either in the mortal age or in the aeon to come, he gives us fairly clear ground of hope that there is a forgiveness of sins in eternity."

Charlie Lovejoy came groping to us at that moment. "You were speaking of the sin that is unto death," he said. "Isn't it such as I who have sinned that? I cut myself out, of the mortal state of probation, and didn't that seal my doom?"

"Are you sorry you did it?" I asked him.

"More sorry than eternity can tell," he answered.

"But are you sorry just for your own welfare," I asked again, "because you threw away something that was valuable to you? Or are you sorry toward God and ashamed for having grieved His love?"

Lovejoy's soul shook with emotion. "Sorry and ashamed," he sobbed.

"Then let us dare to pray for mercy on our three sinful souls," I urged. "We are under conviction of God's Spirit, and that alone shows we have not grieved Him away forever. I tell you boys, I am right in the same boat with you. I can see I have been trusting hitherto even to the point of overconfidence, in the sealing of the Holy Spirit. Now I am trusting in nothing but my Saviour's mercy and grace to help in time of need."

"Can there be mercy for a suicide?" Lovejoy cried.

Little Maggie Rorer touched him timidly. "I am a suicide too, sir," she cried. "I hung myself in poor Mamma's barn. But the dear Saviour has forgiven me. He is here close by my side. Sure if He can love me, He loves you too."

It was then that I got my first whiff of Rorer coming. Maggie did not seem to notice it. Perhaps she never had been so keenly conscious of the beast in him through that particular sense. I felt that time was pressing and suggested a circle of prayer. "What! Here in the open lodge chamber?" Wilkinson exclaimed tremblingly, and for a moment I feared he would change persons again. "My brother!" I cried in alarm, "when you truly repent you will chose the most open place in hell to pray in. And when you have prayed your way back to God's heart again, you will be ready to stand there and let all hell know you are a Christian."

"But the lodge!" Wilkinson whispered. "Already I can see their attention turning this way. Pretty soon old Mack will be onto us and he'll turn perdition lose, but what he'll down us all."

"So much the better!" I declared stoutly. "Quick! There isn't a minute to lose! Down before God!"

So we four souls bowed low there, clinging together in the semi-darkness, while danger muttered and tiptoed around us. But God made a

calm for some moments just about our souls, and I said to Wilkinson, "You begin!"

"God be merciful to me a coward!" Wilkinson began. "Oh God, I'm such a chump! I'm the fellow that was afraid and went and hid his talent in the earth. God, I'd have been saved a hundred and fifty years ago, if I had dared to call my soul my own, and let Christ save it. It wasn't what I knew was right, but it was what the other fellows wouldn't laugh at that I chose to do and chose to be. And when little Brother Prester, here, found his way to hell, where I have been serving out the sentence of an ex-saloonkeeper these many years, and when he came and told me I could still repent and find my mother's God; and when I told him I was sorry for my sin, and I repented and God spoke peace to my soul, then the first minute I found myself alone with the boys again, I went back on my Saviour. I took my old man down from the cross where he had ought to have staid crucified with Christ, and I stuck him up in front of me for a mask, because I was ashamed to let the fellows know that I had got religion. Oh God! if there is mercy for a contemptible backslider and turncoat like me, please for Jesus' sake, take me back and try me over again just this once. Put me in the middle of the searchlight blaze of hell and give me a chance to witness to the boys that Jesus died for me. But oh, Christ! don't leave me! Stay by my side and keep me from getting scared again. Never

mind how long I may have to stay in hell, never mind if old Mack says a charm over me that locks me up in the ante-room ten thousand years; only keep me true to God, and in wonderful mercy bring us all home to heaven at last for Jesus' sake, Amen."

It was now Lovejoy's turn, but when he tried to speak his soul began sobbing like a child. "Dear Christ," he said at last, "it's me praying in hell. I never thought I could, but I am praying now. Oh Christ, I cannot stand it any longer to be far from You. I have tried many other experiments, now let me try what prayer can do for a wilful, reckless self-murderer like me. Oh Jesus, can You save a suicide from hell, and not encourage other worsted sinners on earth to throw up the sponge as I did? Ought You not to make a dreadful example of me, to keep others from doing as I did? Ought You not to send me back to haunt the earth and tell every would-be suicide that it means an eternal loneliness and a doom of separation, and a changeless fate of vain regret to embezzle the sacred trust of living God has given. God knows I have suffered, but not enough to atone for my sin. Eternity in hell could not make up for it. Oh crucified Saviour, let me cast my load of guilt on You. Help me to dare to take the boon of pardon only on Your merit, and because Christ has suffered all the penalty for me. Oh! can I get back to Clara and

Mother? Can I make up to them for all of it in some way through the eternity that still lies before? How I will love God for it! How I will love this dear brother that tried to save me from despair long ago in Tiptleton, and now he has come to try and save me even in hell. Oh God, You know I never hated anybody in my life. I never gave a hard word. I never meant to injure anyone. But I'm not proud of that; for by gentleness I wounded those who loved me that much more deeply. Oh God, I'm so sorry! For Christ's sake forgive me, just to let me show everybody that I am sorry. Maybe that will be the best way to treat a suicide after all. Make me such an example of redeeming mercy, such a miracle of grace, that I can go up and down in hell, as long as perdition lasts, to tell lost souls that Jesus pardoned me and therefore He can save and pardon anybody. Help me to bring ten million suicides to glory. That will be so much better than leaving them in hell. No matter how much pain it costs me! I have thrown away every precious thing that God ever gave me; now help me to throw my own wretched self away even into the arms of Jeus. God bless Dominie Prester and this little girl that says Jesus has found her, although she was a suicide too. Great God! do not let them come to harm for coming back here for us. Help us to stand whatever trial may be coming and pull us out of this old

pseudo-Masonic net of Satan, and help us to pull poor old Uncle Linas Godson out with us too, for our precious Saviour's sake, Amen."

Then we knew that Godson and Galpin and Willoughby were there with us too. Not as yet in our circle of prayer, but hesitating and almost persuaded.

"Go on praying," I said. "There's no time for argument now." We did not continue praying one at a time, but all four together at one moment in unison, each making his own plea, yet following the prayers of the others and saying amen to each simultaneous petition. Lovejoy and Wilkinson prayed for the two who had been their neighbors in Tippleton. I prayed for the conversion of my old Churchville neighbor, Galpin; Maggie prayed for her father. His scent was now so strong that she must have been conscious of his approach. I think God must have curtained us with a little mist of darkness like the pillar of cloud in the rear of the Israelites, for although men and demons seemed to be stirring angrily all about us, none as yet seemed quite to find us in their hatred. The three who had been drawn by our sympathetic interest in their salvation neither knelt with us at first nor did they scoff or turn their backs upon us. Galpin was the first to yield. "I was never inside a prayer meeting in my life," he said, "but I'm damned forever if I don't join this one." So he bowed before God with us and began trying to

pray. We put our embrace around him, encouraging his faltering petitions, and redoubling our entreaties for the other two. Presently Uncle Linas also bowed low with us. It was astonishing to hear this chaplain and past chaplain of devil-worship drawing near to God in penitent prayer. Habitual oaths rose to utterance, and were changed to humble confessions of wrong doing. Jumbles of ritual melted into outpourings of genuine entreaty. In all my experience of revivals, I had never known anything like this. Two suicides, a murderer, a former saloonkeeper, an old drunkard steeped in sin, and I, the chiefest sinner of them all, having so lately fallen from the dignity of a child of heaven into unseemly anger, we mingled our prayers and our confessions, clinging together and praying for one another, with danger lowering around us, and a terrible compression of secret power holding us in even from the freer air of the outside hell itself. Willoughby still lingered near, uncommitted. Suddenly the full glare of the lodge room was turned on. The Noble Grand was at hand well aroused. We stood revealed to thousands of foes shocked, outraged, indignant to find us there conducting a prayer circle of penitents involving prominent members in the center of Mystery Lodge of the Masonic Order of hell.

Willoughby's beak snapped together audibly, and he disappeared in the crowd which was closing in upon us. Apparently it was to be some-

thing like a college rush. Up from beneath, down from above, in from all sides our foes came at us.

"Hang together, and keep on praying," I counselled. "There is no other hope for us now."

The shock of their impact was beyond calculation. The weight of some tens of thousands of spirits, human and satanic, converging their rage and hatred upon us, almost threatened to crush out our existence. Then there came a twisting and grinding action. By scorn, by ridicule, by threat, by taunt, by jibe, by sneer, by seduction, by reproaches, by blandishments, by corruption, by intimidation, by solicitation, by misrepresentation, by every possible appeal to cupidity, or impulsion of fear and pain, they endeavored to wrench us apart, to tear my converts away and to scrape me with torture. Long since I had learned to find some relief from the painfulness of the rub of souls in hell, by raising a little prayer for each soul, thus yielding to its self-seeking momentum, and going a little way with it in a pity so unsought, uncomprehended, and unappreciated as to be, perhaps, of little avail for the sentient object upon which it was bestowed, but availing somewhat nevertheless as a lubricant and air-cushion to spare its author personally a little of the bump and friction of such association. But now the rub of rough, raw souls came as fast and furious as a storm of sand, and the roar of their

imprecations was like that behind Niagara. Still we could hear each other pray, and with power of love mightier than hate, we clung to one another and to God. When one seemed about to be dragged away, we others would twine all our prayer and sympathy about that one. So we were strengthened in our hold upon God by our concern each for the other, and soon we found we could meet our swarming foes with a little fire of pitying intercession, crying "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!" singling out individuals, as fast as we could recognize them, as special objects of appeal. God's grace was being made sufficient for us, and I wondered to see my companions growing in grace under this strange trial. Already they were no longer babes in Christ, but able to stand together in His strength, and to look grave danger manfully in the face. If one of us had for a moment given place in his soul to anger or fear, I believe he would have been torn from us and trampled underneath a mass of satanic hoofs. By every hook that might catch and drag or tear, our persecutors endeavored to divide, that they might conquer us. I felt particularly pained for little Maggie; for Rorer would clutch at her by every handle of her love and fear, and when foiled in each attempt, would beat at her in a revulsion of fury. The others faced more numerous antagonists in all their vast acquaintance of lodge members bent now upon preventing apostasy from the

order. All the secret terrors of the lodge-room were unloosed to put a strain upon them. McGammon seemed ubiquitous. Whenever we could catch a glimpse through the mass of nearer foes, he could be distinguished inciting this one and that to personal attack; while back still further the great Father of evil hovered and planned and lowered with a scowl that obscured the universe.

Hours lengthened, apparently, into days. The confusion of so many encounters, the weight and oppression of so great a multitude of foes rendered it hard to keep track of the passage of eternity. The throng about us grew more and more vast, as we could readily perceive, each member of it being transparent. The news of so strange an occurrence had no doubt e'er this summoned together almost the whole membership of the order. We were almost suffocated in the close atmosphere of their narrow spite, their bigotry of evil. The hot vapour of so many sourly fermenting spirits piled together would have scalded us but for the constant refreshing inrush of the Spirit of grace into our panting souls. Perhaps if we had at first prayed less eagerly for our own deliverance, the trial might have been shorter, for it was noticeable that when we began to pray that God would keep us there until we could convert many more of them, and when we began to plead with them to cast aside the madness of rebellion against God, and flung out our repeated testimony of His forgiveness and power to save,

the rage of some began to change to intelligent curiosity, piqued with amazement at our endurance. The din of their exasperation grew less confusing. Then I distinguished something from far away which made my soul leap. "Comrades," I exclaimed, some one is coming to our rescue!" It was like the tapping upon the rock walls of an exploded mine which tells the prisoners caught in its inner chambers, slowly filling with choke damp, that men are working day and night to clear away the wreckage and reach them. Only these raps were in regular order, with some meaning unknown to two of us. Presently a slight disturbance was noticeable far back at the edge of the lodge space. Some spirit was elbowing its way through that dreary mass of soulless souls, expostulating, giving passwords, grip, signals, disarming suspicion, dodging some blows, meeting threats with bland assurance, wedging its way inch by inch, turning its angle of least resistance toward any little crack between varied facets of many-shaped opponents, slipping this way and that, deaf to imprecations, obtuse to frowns and scowls alike, until it approached near enough to beckon to us, as it struggled in inch by inch against ever-increasing odds.

"Albert!" I exclaimed, for it was Detwiler himself. "How did you dare to do it? How did you get them to let you in?"

But my recognition at once increased the hostility of those about him. With cries of "Trai-

tor! Renegade! Turncoat!" lodge members both human and diabolic, turned upon him with concentrated fury. It began to look doubtful if he would survive to reach us, or would perhaps be overborne and hustled away; but he signaled to us bravely in the midst of his superhuman struggles. "Help is coming," he cried in gasps. "They are praying their way in. They will stave a hole in and come. This hard-shell old cave of Satan can't keep them out. They will win their way in and save you. Never mind about me," he cried again more faintly when he saw us reaching out, as it were, bare arms through flames to draw him in to us; "only tell Alice I did my best."

But we were not to lose our brave herald of deliverance: like a rushing, mighty wind, like a draught through some sudden opening, an influence from far without, swept in through the mob about us, driving it apart like chaff. It swept the breathless but radiant Albert fairly into the arms of our grateful love and brought to our cognizance a peal as of march music set to the twenty-fourth Psalm coming nearer, nearer, nearer, seeming to strike awe and terror into the souls of our opponents, but thrilling our own spirits with an ecstasy of greeting. There is no homesickness like that for heaven, and no gladness of homecoming like that of turning your faces heavenward after hard service in hell. You may try to think, gentle listener, but really you should

go through it yourself to know how we felt as our rescuers swept down the broad lane of approach which the Almighty One opened for them through thick hell. Soon we began to recognize traits of each soul, Father and the one Albert told us was Deacon Spindler, with the two strangers whom Father had won in his mission at Jeroboam's Holl where there, led by the dusky, hell-born guide who had first conducted me from paradise. There was Albert Junior, with all his brotherhood of the heavenly vision. And there was Mother right from heaven, Jeanie and Joy, and Thoughtful, with his brothers, besides, also, little Truth and Abigail, and the Middler, and Content, her youngest great-grandchild. There was Lovejoy's Clara with his mother, also Mrs. Rorer and the praying mothers of Godson and Wilkinson. A number of heaven's great-hearts were in the party, including General Booth and Jerry McAuley. They were accompanied by several score of angels, a squad of Cromwell's Ironsides, some of Constantine's Christian legionaries, and even by Paul himself, the great apostle to the Gentiles. None of us needed introduction; for in a flash each knew the story of the other. Some of us forgot our first reception in heaven in the gladness of this meeting. The people of hell, driven asunder and held back, as the waters of the Red Sea were, long ago, gazed from either side with such vision as each may have had, forgetting hostility in their wonder and wistfulness. Per-

haps the most touching sight of all was that of Lovejoy with the two women who loved him most, the century heart-ache of heaven and remorse of hell mingling and melting into the joy of forgiveness and of love's sure triumph over pain. They touched each other almost timidly in their tenderness hardly able to speak at first. Maggie Rorer and her mother also clung to each other, while in gratitude they could not speak. After a while they both began peering wistfully into the murkiness around, as if in the hope of catching some glimpse of the one who had wronged them most and thus had become the chief object of that deathless capability of forgiving which yearns in the female breast. But Rorer must have hidden himself behind some screen of obdurate hate. The only individual standing out clearly just then from the hell-crowd all about was the Noble Grand Master McGammon. He was discernible making passes in the air; as if endeavoring to weave some new spell of mystery which might avail to prevent our return to the open hell, and so to the free heaven beyond.

The meeting of Joy and Albert seemed almost too sacred for our participation. "This is the real hero of the day!" I exclaimed, drawing him to our family group; "This is our brave deliverer, who brought to us the first message of hope."

"And he has been wondrous faithful to me in my mission among the submerged churches,"

Father testified, "He staid by me, when he was longing to go to his wife and children. He stood with me, when all around but these two converts were hostile. He turned back into hell at the first warning brought by our guide, here, that Nathaniel was in danger."

Albert trembled visibly as his wife came to his side.

"My cousin, my husband!" she exclaimed, "I am proud of you!"

"And can you take me with you, and love me," he asked hesitatingly. "Can you love me as — as you love Nathaniel?"

"Albert" Joy answered, "God gave us to each other as husband and wife on earth, and when I promised many years ago to love and cherish, I meant it not just till death should part us, but I meant it for always. In heaven, you know, we neither marry nor are given in marriage. We are free to love one another, just as love draws most strongly, even as the angels of God do. You will always be different to me from any other man in the world. Brother Nathaniel can never take your place with me."

"But you and he have been together so long," Albert questioned. "You have been growing together in heaven, while I have been growing the other way in hell."

Joy checked him gently, "Do not pain yourself thinking of that any more, dear," she said. "You are so changed now, so glorified! We can

have our wooing all over again. You do not know how glad I have been, and how eager to catch up with you, since Father Prester showed you to me going on before us here. You are the same, and yet so new to me; and I have been a widow so long in heaven!"

"That would be the hardest thing for you to forgive and forget I reckon," Albert said, "that I never seemed really to care, all our married life, whether we should be united in heaven or not."

"I never stopped praying for you," Joy answered. "I haven't yet."

Albert spoke with deep emotion. "It will be the thing for me to aim at for eternity," he declared, "to give God a chance to answer your prayers." "You know, Alice," he continued, "I am just beginning to be anything at all, or really to have an ambition to be something definite some day. I wonder now how you could try so patiently all your married live to pin your love to me, when you could hardly hold me still long enough in any one character to pin anything to. But when I gave what there was of me to God, here in hell, under the spell of a far vision I had of you that came when Nat prayed for it at the Christian Science meeting — and when I was born again and began to have a fixed life, and God melted me down and ran me into His mould, to shape me just to be one person and not a dozen, or a score by turns; why ever since that time my

dearest human hope has been to be admitted some day, by God's great mercy in Christ, into the circle of your friends in heaven. I don't want to bother you with the recollection that we were once husband and wife. I can hardly ever expect to be as much to you as some others; but I would like so much just to be near you and our children quietly, and watch your happiness, and sometimes have you notice me as a friend."

But Joy would not agree to this at all. "I shall be proud to let every one know that you are my husband," she said, "and how nobly you have won your way back to me from hell. And the other women, seeing you, will be stirred to keep on praying for their poor, lost husbands. Our Albert too will be so proud and glad to introduce you to our new friends and to have the old friends know that you have come at last. You can never know how glad our boy was, or how glad he made me, when he came for a little while to tell me of your conversion."

"And father" Albert Junior added, "you will find our friendships different in heaven. Sometimes taking one more into the circle only makes love stronger and dearer with the others. When I came to heaven so early from the earth-life, I found Mamma and brother Nathaniel devoted to each other; for his Jeanie had not come yet; but they seemed to be really happier still together after I joined them, and we three have been truly company for each other ever since."

“Yes, and we will love our brother Nat more dearly for finding you,” Joy added.

For myself, my exultation was chastened with a feeling of embarrassment, especially in meeting Jeanie and Joy and Mother, such as I had not yet known in the spirit life.

“Do not caress me,” I entreated. “until you have reflected again upon my course in hell.” Then I showed it all to them carefully and in detail, particularly my encounter with the Satana in the guises of the sister socialist and of the mother angel. “Am I pure enough for your kisses,” I asked, “when I twice so nearly received the kiss of pollution and death?”

“But they only drew me closer. “Dear boy” Jeanie said, “I told you not to come in here without me. Promise never to go anywhere in hell again without your girl to protect you from that dreadful woman!”

“I think you would be wise, hereafter, to take Jeanie with you as she says, my son,” Mother counselled. “She will be a protection to you. You know you could never estimate the professions of a plausible female.”

But Joy said, even with heart-tears, “We are so glad! so glad! dear brother, so glad you were not lost to us! And we will love you so dearly hereafter; that no matter where you go, you can never be lonely again. Our love will radiate, and reach you, and warm your heart even out on the

edge of the universe, searching some bleak corner of hell."

I have thus narrated, separately and in detail, the greetings of a few crowded moments. We were so happy now, that we found it hard to hold ourselves down in hell. Only Galpin and Godson hesitated about the propriety of their seeking to enter heaven as yet.

"What sort of a figure would I cut in heaven?" Galpin asked. "I never went to church, I suppose, twenty times in my life. I don't know how to act among pious people. I'm not fit for their company. The ushers would be nervous to see me around, and I'd scare the choir so they couldn't sing. A mission is the only place for me — something rough and tumble, like we've just been through. I think I'd better go and look up Alf. Tyson, and three or four other men I sent here before their time. I'd better be making it up to them helping them to find Christ and the way out. Maybe after I've been praying in hell as long as I've been blaspheming and tearing things loose, I'd feel more decent and respectable to come and knock at heaven's gate. And I'd feel better if I could take some poor devil with me. I've been dragging other people down all my life, and by God's help I'd like to pull somebody up with me. I tell you, I'm not fit for heaven yet; I'm only fit to go up and down in hell, roaring it out that I'm saved, and

if God can save me, He can save the Devil himself. Then when Jesus has helped me to get a crowd of penitent murderers and hell-toughs like myself, together; so that I'm sure of congenial company in heaven; I'll ask the Lord to let us go softly up to the mourner's bench in glory, and cover our sight there for a hundred years or so, until we feel more fit to stand up and shake hands before the altar."

Uncle Linas showed a similar reluctance. "I fear me," he said, "that I would feel less at ease in heaven than of yore in the Tippleton Presbyterian Church. I paid my pew rents there, and I scarce feel that I was more of a hypocrite than some others. But what right would I have in heaven — a poor old soak, bloated with vice and tainted rotten with devil-worship?"

"To as many as received Him, to them gave He the right, *ἐξουσίαν* to become the Sons of God," Father quoted, interrupting him.

"I know well that He has done it," Godson answered humbly, "I am God's son at last, glory to Jesus! But am I fit indeed for my Father's house? Can I spring, even at a bound, from Satan's altar to heaven's home? Would it not behoove the Father rather to find some place for me outside the door half way up the lane of glory, where I could sometimes point out the way to other sons coming back home?"

"So the prodigal son thought," Albert Junior

suggested. "He said, 'make me as one of thy hired servants.' But the Father found no place for him short of the dining hall, with the best robe, and the ring, and the sandals."

"And can we go straight to heaven?" Lovejoy asked, incredulous for gladness. "Can a suicide repent, and go straight from hell to heaven? Can we stay right with you, and never be separated any more?"

"Jesus said to the malefactor on the cross beside Him, 'this day shalt thou be with me in paradise'" Father quoted again.

"And He says 'knock and it shall be opened unto you,'" Jeanie suggested." "Him that cometh unto me," Jesus said, 'I will in no wise cast out.'"

"It isn't just!" exclaimed Galpin, "It isn't fair, it isn't right, and it can never be. You good people have been serving God all your days, and it took you a life time on earth to get ready for heaven. We on our side have been hustling for the devil more than two hundred years. It ain't a square deal to let us strike our job and go over to your Master and get the same reward as you."

"The man that sought for laborers for his vineyard gave each of the eleventh hour men a penny, the same as the others," Mother contended loyally.

"That's charity: the bargain with the first hour

men was business," Galpin protested, "I've read my Testament some, if I haven't been going to church."

"Brothers," Father declared. "You are all three somewhat disposed to limit the grace of God. There is unbelief still lurking in your hearts. Certainly it is charity. Heaven is all charity. 'The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' If it wasn't a free gift; you and I would never have it. You may even stay in hell and work for God twice as long as you have served Satan, but that would not buy for you the right of one square inch of heaven. Neither can you become fit for heaven by centuries of service outside. The regenerating work of the Holy Spirit upon our natures alone fits us for heaven. The time element may or may not enter into the problem. You may be born again with long throes, or with none. It is the fact, and not the process which counts. Only this is essential, 'Ye must be born again!'"

"Where, then, do we attend to reaping that which we have sown?" Uncle Linas asked, "If faith can save us so instantly and completely from all the consequences of evil doing, does it not make void the law?"

"I don't believe any man anywhere did a mean thing, but what he's got to suffer for it," Galpin agreed. "I expect to smart for all my devilment, and enjoy heaven afterwards."

“If that is true” Lovejoy argued, “You and I will never see heaven! hell couldn’t last long enough for you and me to reap all the crop of wild oats we have put in.”

“Brothers,” Father again counseled them, “I perceive that Satan is endeavoring to gain a hold again upon your thoughts, to weigh you down with despair. None of us can atone for his own sin. None of us need bear the judgment of it or pay the debt of it, or work out the sentence of it, in any way. Jesus paid it all. ‘All we like sheep have gone astray and God hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.’ Thus ‘He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world! The way to God’s heart and the way to heaven is open to each of us. It leads past the cross of Calvary. If there remains still an inevitable after-math of regret and pain and loss as the lingering consequences of evil doing; deem it not your punishment, Jesus bore all that; it is God’s chastening, by which He means to help you to remember and leave sin alone forever. Heaven is different to each of us. Each heart has its joys there, and its sorrow. You will not there grieve less for your wrong past, but grieve more. You will not grow less eager to make amends, but more eager. There are centuries of reparation still, before

you, men. But all this will only mellow and sweeten your heaven. It will not exclude or shut you out; but, the rather, lead you deeper in. Only you must be found ever in Christ, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is by faith in Him."

As father spoke the souls of our converts began to glow with unutterable hope. "Come along with us to heaven men," I urged them. "Your place has been waiting for you these million years. God needs you there just now to tell your wonderful story of redeeming grace, and to fire the hearts of thousands to come and seek for lost souls in hell. You need heaven too. You need its friendships, its joys, its worship. You need heaven's schooling, and when you come back here from heaven's own theological seminary, you will come as the very priests of salvation, clothed with power to bring God near to others."

Even while I spoke we were floating up and out, in glad assent. Father started a hymn, and we all joined with him in singing —

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
Oh Lamb of God, I come.

"Just as I am, and waiting not,
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
Oh Lamb of God, I come."

Hell closed in behind us thick with wondering, wistful souls. They seemed to stretch out hands after us, not to restrain, but as if longing to be lifted. "Look Father!" I cried, "how white hell's fields are to the harvest!"

"Yes my son," he answered, "Let us pray the Father that He may send forth many laborers into His harvest."

Only McGammon seemed to be straining impotently to bar our progress. At last we passed him at the riven boundary of his secret domain, casting spells and imprecations after us.

"Ungrateful Reverend Sir," he called to me in passing, "Never again shall you enter this sacred inclosure, whose trust you have thus basely betrayed!"

"Most Noble Grand Master," I replied, "When God wills, I will come again and bring with me five thousand evangelists of the choicest ex-Masons of heaven."

Then we looked back and could just distinguish Elder Smiley settling himself for a five years' talk, in justice to the remarkable event just witnessed.

"Will hell really punish that man," Jeanie queried, "so long as he can still keep on talking?"

"Think what a tireless preacher he will make," Mother answered, "when he really becomes converted and gets to talking for God."

"It seems almost heartless to go and leave them all here in their sin," Joy declared.

"We are not the only ones who have been, and are, and will be working for God in hell," our swarthy guide suggested.

"If we could but show all this company that far illumination of hell's mission field upon which you were gazing in such wonder when I came down." Father returned wistfully.

Even while he spoke the soft lights began to glow amid the gloom. The nearest were ever so far away; yet they brought many individual spirits into view of those who were working for souls or being drawn to Christ. Here it was a single worker, there a Bible class of a score, yonder a great audience, drawn by the Word amid the inconceivable vastness of pagan hell.

In the midst of the scene of infinite distances thus presented to our gaze, and so transparently irradiant as not to hide the view of what was beyond, we beheld the vision of a ladder let down from heaven, shaped in the outlines of a cross with One nailed upon it wearing a crown of thorns. On this mystic ladder of a life laid down for all eternity angels of God were ascending and descending from heaven to hell.

For a few rapt moments, this wondrous, soft illumination held our gaze. Then, as it faded into darkness again, we each clasped strongly the soul's hand of the other for the thrill and the sweep of the swift, sweet rush up out of hell's murkiness into the unchanged noonday glory of heaven's broad, glad day.

CHAPTER XVIII

I confess that we enjoyed rather a lazy while after that in heaven. The holiday spirit was strong upon us. It is so sweet to feel, when one has done his best, and expended his mite of force to the uttermost for God, that he may find even a sacred mission and obligation in rest and enjoyment; and leaving the vast projects of the universe contentedly in the hands of their Originator, needs only devote himself, a while, to absorbing all the gladness which comes his way, while he gives recuperating forces a chance to put in their full work upon him and stores up in every cell of his being sunshine and sweetness for future use.

To begin with, we were astonished by the number of people who were watching to meet us, as we emerged in heaven. Thousands had felt the vibration of the ripple stirred by our rescuing party as they went down after us into hell, and had been praying for us mightily while they were gone. These set up a shout of praise on beholding us, which made heaven's well-kin ring, and drew still other hundreds of thousands to be interested in our brands snatched from hell's burning. There was joy that day in the presence of the angels of God. The contrast of all these radiant presences with those among whom we had been moving so long made us fairly laugh for joy. When the Lord thus turned again our

captivity, we were like them that dream. All spirit faces turned toward us, were softened with pity over the ethnological specimens grace had wrested and rescued from hell's piteous population; yet thrilled with mighty joy over this earnest of conquests yet to be won. We noticed just one waiting soul whose aspect showed some discouragement of hope deferred. This was little Sadie Echols. She called me one side for a moment and asked me if I had seen anything of Hatchett among the low places of hell. I shrank unutterably from telling her now of how I had almost fancied I had recognized his palid soul corpse in that awful vision of the morgue of hell, seen through the lense of the She-devil's soul at the time of my first temptation — just a face amid all that writhing mass, with staring eye-balls half unconscious, yet agonized with pangs and qualms of the second death. "This may have been only a fancy, Sadie," I assured her pityingly.

"But will you take me with you the next time, and let me look for him?" she pleaded. "Jesus brings the dead to life."

"It depends upon your motive, sister," I answered. "You remember that this has been Satan's snare for you from the beginning. It was your besottment of blind devotion to Hatchett which cost you your childhood's faith, your innocence and virtue, which cost you a century of heaven, and reduced you to a jaded hag of perdition."

"It isn't that now," said Sadie, "but I am so sorry for poor Hatchett. Remember how near you were to that dreadful place yourself. If he can only be saved; I would be glad to keep away from him for ever; if God said so."

"But there would be no need, dear friend," I said. "If you love Hatchett only to save him; your love becomes a sacred thing. In loving thus you are born of God. Go and wait upon God in prayer for your husband, and listen for the signal of our return to hell."

So when we found wondering men and angels clustering around our converts we counseled them to go and tell their story through heaven.

"Interest as many as you can to seek for God's call to the work of the Gospel ministry in hell," Father advised, "and wait the signal of our return. All are priests here: you will find no laity in heaven."

Of course there were a lot of the dear descendants and ancestors in the crowd, and it was pleasant to tarry with them for a little family reunion and old home week of several thousand attendants. When the last word has been said, your own are nearest. The very oppositeness of temperament which so often tires our patience in our kinsfolk rather endears them to us in the end, and their society is especially good for us when we are in danger, in the company of others, of being overpraised. After the Presters had dispersed, we went to visit awhile with some of Mother's people

and ran across the Churchville uncle — I confess somewhat to our surprise.

“Why Uncle Adolphus,” I exclaimed, without meaning to be rude, “how did you ever get to heaven?”

“You were not expecting to see me then?” he asked somewhat quizzically.

“Oh I, might have known,” I replied, “that if there was a good thing on the market you would not fail to get in your bid; but I had some doubts, I admit, of the success of your usual methods in the particular matter of a clear title to mansions in the sky.”

“Nathaniel,” he confessed, “do you know, I was perhaps one of the most astonished souls in eternity when I awoke after dying, and did not find myself in heaven? I looked around me and rubbed my eyes (metaphorically) to find myself in such unexpected surroundings. I was in church, but I knew from the start something was wrong. After being trustee of the Churchville Congregational Church for nearly forty years, and treasurer of the same for half that period, attending church Sunday by Sunday throughout eleven pastorates, I fancy I know what is what in churches. The order of the service in this case was all correct enough; and yet something seemed most astonishingly strange about it. And before it was half over I said to my soul. “Phew! there’s something rotten in this,” and I got out of there. I visited several churches like those Mr.

Prester tells us of, but each one seemed a little more topsy turvy than the one before. They frightened me. This can't be heaven, I thought. It isn't even as decent as Churchville. I felt sick of the whole thing. I looked around to see if anyone was keeping store; but I didn't find any. And then I began to inquire, just as I would in any other strange place, if there was a Masonic lodge. So I got into one and I found some old acquaintances; but the deviltry that was going on beggars description. I took one of them one side and asked him confidentially, 'Say, is this hell?' Then he told me it was, but I mustn't say anything about that. I concealed my agitation with a great effort, realizing that I had to, and pulled myself together as best I could, got in the center of the lodge-room, made my signal as unconcernedly as I knew how to the past Worshipful, gave the proper password at the entrance, and thanked my stars when I got out of the lodge unhindered. After that I wandered in desert places and would have nothing to do with any one; for I was afraid of them all. I began to ask myself seriously how this had all come about. I had been going to church, and lodge, and town council, and village improvement society, and keeping store the greater part of my life without reproach. I had made money during the war, and had kept adding to it ever since. I had lived in a brick house and been one of the foremost men in Churchville. I had bowed in prayer in public,

and occasionally led in prayer at the prayer-meeting. Now it began to work in my mind, there in the wilderness of hell, that I had never really prayed. I thought that over for ten years and more, and then began to call upon God, sure enough. I told Him what I had frequently declared in prayer-meeting; that I meant to make heaven my home. I had failed on this somewhat, and I wished to know why; for I didn't mean to relinquish the attempt as long as there seemed still any use in trying. I prayed in this way for ninety years, without achieving any results. By this time my nerve began to give out, and at last it began to come over me very gradually to ask if there might not be something radically wrong with Adolphus himself. No one came to talk with me about it. The idea slowly evolved within my own mind. I think it was nearly thirty-five years more before it got full hold of me. And then one day, standing afar off on the edge of hell, and not daring as it were to lift up so much as my eyes to heaven, the impulse came over me to smite upon my breast and cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' That was where this churchman got religion at last, and I have been truly on my way to heaven ever since. I no longer prayed to reach heaven, however. I prayed to get right with God, and when I got right with God all through, I suddenly and unexpectedly found myself in heaven."

"Uncle Adolphus," I exclaimed rapturously,

"I was always proud of you; uncomfortable as I often felt with you; but to-day I glory in you, and I love you."

It was this uncle who first suggested to my mind the propriety of approaching Doctor Christman, on the subject of inaugurating the great Simultaneous Campaign in hell. He listened while I unfolded my crude ideal of what ought to be done, and how it ought to be done in evangelizing the nether world; and then he replied with something of old-time, enthusiasm-squelching poise of thought.

"My dear nephew," he said, "your plan is not as far off the trail as some I have heard you broach; but you must try and not feel offended if I suggest that some responsible, well balanced leader of men like John Wesley, or your great evangelist leader, Christman, ought to be found to take it up, and organize it, and make a success of it. The mix-up you butted into with McGammon and with that devil-woman shows that you have learned little since you were in Churchville about the art of really accomplishing things. You mean well, Nathaniel, but oh! you are still such a blunderbuss!"

It was Uncle Adolphus, too, who told me how we ought to find Harry. "Mark my words" he said, "Harry Prester is somewhere out in that no-man's-land of hell where I have been so long. But you won't get to him by praying for him. At least you want to do it under your breath. If

anybody'd tried to pray their way to me those first ninety years, it would have pushed me off like the negative pole of a magnet. Get into his world of things. Think about wheels, move in wheels; keep your eye on everything that wheels. All of you wheel together; until you draw him in, or roll out nearer to him."

So we did, all the kinsmen on both sides who had known Harry, also some of his wife's people and Albert Detwiler and Joy and some other old friends. We separated so far that we could just circle and touch. We prayed very softly for God's help; but we talked to each other only of wheels. As we went, we contemplated the swift cycles of the spheres; the planets, turning upon their orbits and coursing round our sun, Jupiter at the rate of 29,000 miles an hour, Venus, 76,000 miles an hour, Mercury 103,000 miles an hour, also the still vaster sweep of twin suns circling one around another, and the rush of comets from system to system. We put our minds solely upon the mechanism of the universe, together with the latest mechanical inventions of created minds. We had kept this up for several months, and had thus traversed a considerable portion of the stellar universe (if immensity may be spoken of as divided into portions) and were returning backward upon our track for more careful searching, when Mother's circle touched mine and she said very softly, "I have found him." We let the word pass out quietly to one and another, until

we had drawn our band together in a narrowing hollow sphere with poor Harry at the center. But we ourselves found it necessary to move very rapidly as a company; for my poor brother had apparently gone entirely motion mad. Whether by the dizziness of watching so many and such varied movements of the universe, or by the American spirit of emulation and self-confidence wrought up to an immoderate extreme, we found our brother tearing along in an irresponsible hyperbola, tumbling over and over with inconceivable rapidity as he swept onward toward infinity. We were at our wits' end how to attract his attention; for he was liable to go right through any one of us, or the whole line of us, if we got in his path, without pause or recognition. Indeed, none but a mother's discerning glance would have recognized Harry himself in his cyclonic flight; but having him once pointed out, we gradually became sure of him by the whirling of wheels in his soul.

"Stop him! detain him! head him off!" poor Father cried, growing excited.

"How can we do it?" came from all sides simultaneously. Then Joy made a suggestion.

"Let's all love him at once with all our might," she shouted.

We put her counsel into action and kept it up persistently, as we accompanied him in his mad career. After a considerable time, we noticed a slowing down in both his external motions as well

as in the clock-work within his soul. We redoubled the pull of our anxious affection with increasing effect; until, to our intense relief, Harry came to a full stop and began to blink around upon us, confusedly in the grey twilight of his non-ethical world. He was indeed a pitiable object, when still enough for critical inspection. His internal bearings were badly worn, and his running gear more or less wobbly throughout. His higher spiritual nature had been stowed and cramped away into so small a receptacle for so long a period that it was only with delicate carefulness and microscopic attention we could draw it out and appeal to it.

"My long lost boy," mother exclaimed, "don't you know me?"

Harry panted and wheezed and finally stuttered out, "Is it you, mother? Do you care?"

"Of course we care," Mother and his wife cried both at once; but his mind seemed still confused; so we all said it together quite distinctly, which appeared to startle him into clearer consciousness.

"We are all loving you, friend Harry," Joy said. "We have always been interested in you; we long to see you saved."

"It seems strange you never pulled that lever in me before," Harry rejoined.

"We tried all along to let you see it, old fellow," I remonstrated, "but we very rarely seemed to get your attention; and when we did, the strong momentum of your nature seemed to fling our

proffered expression of concern for your eternal welfare back into our faces."

"You ought to have climbed on the tender, applied air pressure to my rear driver, and pushed on my throttle until you got me reversed," he protested.

"Thank God we have overtaken you this time," Father panted, still somewhat winded by his exertions; "but if grace does not accomplish your conversion now, I doubt if we will ever succeed in bringing you to a standstill again."

"I don't believe I could go much further without a breakdown anyhow," Harry admitted, looking himself over.

"Then come away from all this, my boy," advised Uncle Adolphus; "live for something that pays. Get religion. Aim for heaven."

So we appealed to him from all sides. For the first time in our whole experience of him we seemed really to have his attention and to arouse him to concern for his higher well-fare. Only he seemed somewhat puzzled to realize what we wished him to do. All religious lines of thought had been so long left entirely on one side from his course in life, that it seemed hard for him to turn to the simplest ethical or spiritual conception.

"I wish we had Strong here to sing to him 'Life is Like a Mountain Railway,'" I suggested to Jeanie. "It might express salvation in a terminology which would convey more meaning to him."

"I'm with you my hearty," came a cheering greeting from behind, as the exuberant singer came into our group with an easy swing. He gave us the sensations of shaking hands rapidly all around and having clapped Harry on the back, psychologically speaking, he said, "Now my man, what's the difficulty here? Are your friends cross-circuiting you and getting your ideas in a tangle? Suppose you let me sing you a song that may light up the track ahead a little better."

Then he sang the same dear old lyric with which he somehow always managed to get hold of men: a rich collection of railway metaphors made up of curves, tressels, grades, throttle and rails with a union station at the end representing heaven. It seemed to me to contain almost too much imagery for its solid content to convert anyone: yet Strong appeared never to use it without effect. Harry was silent for a while after he concluded, then he said, rather wearily looking around on us all, "I give in. Take me in tow, if you want to. Show me the way, and by God's help I'll follow it. I've got to pull in somewhere and make repairs, that's certain."

So we won Harry to Christ and heaven. Gradually, with infinite pains — a little pull here and a lift there — and when we could feel sure that the dear fellow was really converted and on the narrow way that leads to life, and we were congratu-

lating each other before separating, I ventured to suggest to Brother Strong and the rest that we ought to undertake other similar endeavors. "This is coöperative evangelism," I declared. "This is what hell needs. Surely there are enough of us, with God's blessing, to make a success of the enterprise if we would go at it."

"You would empty heaven into hell," Strong objected.

"To bring half of hell back with it," I contended.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed," Father recited, "shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

"Soon heaven would be doubly glad and busy," Jeanie declared, "taking care of its sheaves."

"Say, Brother Strong," I asked, "haven't you enjoyed this bit of personal work with my brother more than anything you have experienced since you came to heaven?"

Strong could not deny that he had. "It was immense," he declared, "was that hell?" "It was a part of the City's great 'Without'" Father explained: "it was the hell of banishment from heaven."

The Singer jumped visibly. "Then I was in hell and didn't know it!" he exclaimed.

"Never mind, Brother Strong, you were there on a noble errand," Jeanie said comfortingly.

"But your brother-in-law should have been damned forever," he gasped, "and here I have been helping to save him!"

"You know that there must have been something wrong with your doctrine, do you not, dear brother?" Joy asked. "And when we gather you will go with us, will you not, like an Orpheus of redemption, to sing the love of Jesus into the hearts of ruined men and women in hell?"

"God help me!" exclaimed the evangelist in deep agitation: "surely if it wasn't His will, it wouldn't work. Why, I'd rather put in a thousand years in a succession of such thrills as this, than to be acknowledged the leading soloist of the skies."

CHAPTER XIX

After that we had another little rest, visiting with Jeanie's people, and some of the old Serenity Folks. Two brighter, more heartsome country women than Jeanie's mother and grandmother I have not found. Neither had ever really experienced old age of soul, and Mrs. Whitney, the grandmother, especially, had found little need, as so many of us do, who have lived beyond our threescore and ten years of mortal life — of growing young again in heaven. I can never forget the sacred week which the precious lady occupied in dying. Blind with age, sitting half upright in bed, without an ache or ailment, save that she felt tired and slept often, she concerned herself affectionally for the comfort of each caller, thinking to the last day more for others than for herself. "Yes, this is the good-by time," she would say cheerily to one. "I never had anything like it; so it is easy to tell." "When I was a girl of sixteen," she said to another, "I had a week in bed with a little spell of measles. Except when the children came, that is the only thing I can remember like this. So I know it is the beginning." She never spoke of it as the end, but only as the beginning. So when I found her in heaven, I noticed less change in her soul than in anyone. "Nathaniel, I'm glad you've come," she said, kissing me without any ado. "Your baby twins,

Hope and Joy, and I have been looking for you." She was then a hundred and forty years young, and as fresh and sweet as before she had the measles. Brother McDaniel, Jeanie's father, also, was there and as great a character as ever, even more guileless in his sagacity. "You'll find me changed a bit, my boy," he said in greeting. "For one thing, when I talk to God, I make each prayer a little different now."

In heaven they had all gotten into touch again with the old Serenity folks, Elder and Mrs. Jobes, Doctor McCorkle, the 'McWhorter Girls' of uncertain age, and a good many more of the sainted country people. There they were living as neighbors still in much the same unruffled, easy way, visiting back and forth, and getting together for worship somewhat as of yore. "Heaven is a grand, wide, stirring world," Miss Christine Tinker would say. "It's rare to take a trip about now and then. But for solid quiet in the long reach, give us our quiet neighborhood, with the old friends all about."

So when Jeanie and I made them this little restful visit, after Harry's conversion, it was not so greatly different, after all, from our silver wedding trip back to Serenity; only there were fewer gaps in the community life. We hardly hoped to persuade any of these placid souls to undertake with us an enterprise so novel as a mission to hell, and we looked forward rather to a sweet, objectless time in their midst, with leisure to frolic

with those blessed sinless twins, Hope and Joy, our babies forever more. But Mrs. Rorer and Maggie had been there already, and there was hardly a family which was not thinking with yearning of some loved one lost to heaven. There is no family spirit stronger than that of the Scotch-Irish Pennsylvania farmer's household, and we found strong spirits among them already girding up their loins for the pilgrimage to hell. Their eagerness encouraged us to look for other groups of old friends of former charges, and stopping places in life's pilgrimage, in the hope of gaining other recruits; and soon to our great rejoicing, we had begun to book quite a little company of volunteers for our coming invasion of the Satanic Kingdom. There were Truth Cus-tis and Captain Burroughs, Brother Moss, and Mrs. Moss, the Colonel and his wife from Oldboro, Aunt Lossie and Laura from Ainslie, Brother Rankin, and Manie, and her poet brother, Castle, from the colony, Brother Sweet and Elder Billy from Mount Latitude, Miss Mag and little Dor-ritt from the Valley of Summer, Captain Town-send from Seacong, Doctor Cottrell and Brother Birch from Churchville, my young elder, Irving True from Tippleton, with Grandma True, Mrs. Frank True, John A. and John P., Miss Janette and Elder Baillie and Superintendent Rice of the Rescue Mission in Mill River, the dear exhorters from Our Father's House in Worcester, Brother Adair and Father Mueller from Colby.

Brother Robbins and Grace led the group from the Good Hope Church, my first charge, and of course almost the entire membership of my last charge, the church of the Aeonian Redemption were eager to accompany us; these last a splendid circle of earnest, intelligent men and women, many of them better preachers than I — just a bit Bostonian still, to be sure (even heaven could not quite eclipse that distinction) — but true hearted, clear souled, and deliciously ready for the next new thing. No doubt some of my listeners have met one or another of these old earth-friends of ours whom I have mentioned. To our mind, heaven would not be so interesting without them. These, with hundreds just as dear from my all-too-numerous pastoral charges of earth rallied to our endeavor and began praying for special equipment of grace to help them in their mission to hell. On earth Jeanie had kept in touch with many of these dear people by correspondence with choice spirits of pastorates left behind; and we had often declared that if we could only assemble them all together into one congregation, only heaven could be better. “Isn’t it wonderful!” Jeanie exclaimed now, “that our dream is coming true at last, and all for an excursion to hell!”

Besides these we found some of my college chums and seminary mates like Jim Morris, and Stryker and Golucky, and Tommy Cottrell, also hundreds of brothers beloved in the ministry. Our enterprise was growing to astonishing pro-

portions. Each recruit was interesting others, and soon strangers hailing from other localities, even of other climes and ages and planets, were coming to enlist for the enterprise. Last but not least of these was Christian Israel just from earth. Workers already in hell sent notice of their intention to join with us. I was becoming almost frightened by the size to which the missionary party seemed likely to grow, and often said to Jeanie, "We must look Doctor Christman up, and put the whole undertaking into his hands to be organized."

"You are the one who began this particular movement," Jeanie would reply, "and by God's help you ought to claim your job, and see it through."

"I might be crazed by such a task," I protested. "Christman has had experience; he has native ability; he is at home with the 'simultaneous' idea. The best I could do would be to turn all these soul-seekers loose in hell and bid them go as they please."

"Wouldn't that be the most effective way in the end?" Jeanie protested.

"We would melt apart and be lost to each other, like so many raindrops in the ocean," I declared.

I wondered also to find how much of this infernal mission work had been going on for ages from heaven, and only now when I had come into thorough heart-sympathy with it, was it coming

within my cognizance as a systematized part of heaven's vast activities. Especially among those who had died in pagan darkness had the preaching of the gospel been progressing successfully for centuries. I was particularly interested in the case of those pagan and Judaic relatives of Paul's converts who had died before the message of the gospel could reach them, and for whom these converts were accustomed to have themselves baptized vicariously, believing that regenerating grace would in some way find them out in the spirit world in answer to the faith of the one who had received baptism on their behalf and in their place. When I found how effective this ancient expression of love and faith had proven in a number of instances, I asked my friend Peale (as we met and compared notes during our furlough) why this baptism for relatives deceased in paganism had never been (so far as I had ever heard) permitted to the converts of modern missions.

"Our Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century missionaries in foreign lands," he replied, "recoiled from anything which squinted toward a belief in future probation. They feared that it would 'cut the nerve of missions.'"

"But what is your own conclusion in the case," I asked, "established in the increased light of a missionary's observation in both worlds?"

"I am convinced of two things, neither of them clearly perceived on earth (where my actual experience on the foreign field was so brief)," he

answered confidently. "First, I believe the missionaries who, even secretly, cherished a hope of a grander work of redemption wrought out in eternity had really more nerve for their work amid almost heart-breaking discouragements from the inertia of paganism. Secondly, I have overwhelming evidence that the contrary doctrine, ostensibly set forth by our orthodox churches, of a hopeless state of perdition for all who had died without a knowledge of Christ and a pre-mortem vital faith in Him caused many a heathen mind, in worshipful attachment to its ancestors, to recoil in horror from Christianity. I really believe it would have helped us to make speedier missionary conquests if we had permitted, as Paul seems to have done, the rite of baptism for the dead, and if we could have encouraged our converts to hope that they might, in the consistency of God's love and mercy, be permitted to seek out their loved ones gone before into eternity with the gospel message they had never heard on earth."

I asked him what he thought of the suggestion of Uncle Adolphus that I should interest Doctor Christman to drill and organize our increasing mob of enthusiasts for a sane and well-balanced simultaneous campaign in hell.

"The idea is an excellent one, Prester," Peale answered. "For all you know, in the largeness of hell, Doctor Christman may have already been at this favorite work of his in that region these hundred years. Certainly in our work among

deceased heathen we would have accomplished much less permanent advance, without a thorough missionary organization."

Thus encouraged, Jeanie and I prayed our way to the great evangelistic captain, and said to him, "Doctor Christman, we would like to interest you to take charge of an impending simultaneous evangelistic campaign in hell."

Christman seemed less frightened than we had feared he might be. "I have heard rumors of a proposed infernal propaganda," he said thoughtfully. "I even heard that my friend General Booth is thinking seriously of marching his whole Army into hell. But I have never been accustomed to commit myself to any venture without a great deal of preliminary consideration. Perhaps you remember how long I hesitated before engaging for the visit to Mill River.

"Doctor, we couldn't blame you!" we both exclaimed in a breath.

"Well, just as in that case," he answered, with his own smile, inimitable in its humor of triumph over sadness,—“just as in that case of Mill River, I would like you to give me some assurance of a fighting chance for success in this strange undertaking."

We recounted to him something of our own experience in hell, and called in Father, Albert Detwiler, and Charlie Lovejoy for corroborating encouragement.

"How many converts do I understand you

made, all told, the two of you, in the months of your endeavor?" asked the evangelist.

"Something less than fifty in all," we admitted.

"But if I heard aright," Doctor Christman persisted, "the bulk of these were converted, not so much as the fruits of evangelistic preaching or of personal work, as by a remarkable vision of heaven which came unexpectedly upon a gathering of Christian Scientists."

"That is true," I confessed. "Aside from this wonderful event, which may, possibly, never be repeated, I won just one convert by my preaching, and six others by personal work."

"And your father?" he interrogated again.

"Two by preaching," Father reported, "and one by getting myself condemned for heresy."

"May I ask, gentlemen," Christman continued, "how much gospel preaching you each did during all that time?"

Father explained that he was preaching regularly and statedly almost the whole time, and I, that I had only found opportunity for one sermon.

"It does not strike me, gentlemen, on the face of your returns," the evangelist demurred, "that hell is an encouraging field for gospel preaching. More seems to have been accomplished by personal work, and not overmuch by that."

"But I realize that I was preaching all the time to the wrong people," Father explained.

"And I was exploring one of the most hope-

less quarters of hell, and having interviews with Satan and his archangels," was my own apology.

The doctor turned to Father with a sudden impulse. "Do you suppose," he asked, "that those interesting churches in hell, of which you have been telling me, might be led to agree upon an invitation and might call for the simultaneous evangelistic campaign to be held among them? Would this give the movement a standing and assumed basis of support and of acceptance among the people of hell themselves?"

Father gave a sorrowfully negative gesture. "It causes me sincere regret to discourage that suggestion," he replied. "My own experience and observation of these churches leads me to fear that they dread and deprecate and disapprove of nothing so much as of evangelistic effort and evangelistic preaching."

"You both think, then," he asked further, "that it would be better to conduct our campaign entirely in the open hell, without any attempt to avail ourselves of the unifying and uplifting influences of the churches and of the societies?"

"I think this must have been the providence which was in our mistakes and trials, Nathaniel's and mine," Father answered humbly. "I think we have learned the lesson for you all to make heaven our only base, and God and each other our only reliance."

"It has never been my custom," the evangelist mused; "I have never yet conducted a campaign

except upon a practically unanimous invitation of the churches."

"Please, then, send some one else to obtain it this time," Father requested plaintively.

"I am only speaking of a method which you both yourselves practically employed," the doctor argued; "and if by availing yourselves of all the aid you could get from churches and lodges alike, you still found such very moderate success, what results can we expect on an irresponsible sally into hell, uninvited and unaccredited to the people among whom we plan to work? We might win such meagre acceptance and bring back so few converts as to discourage future evangelistic efforts in those infernal regions for a long time to come.

"Doctor!" exclaimed Lovejoy, coming forward impulsively, "you do not need to count your converts. I have found that one poor sinner saved like me is enough to bring joy in the presence of the angels of God more than ninety and nine already past the need of repentance."

"I think, Doctor," Father added, "that if we can find ten thousand evangelists ready to go on a mission to hell, and if we can go and work there simultaneously and heartily say for ten years, and can in consequence of our united labors bring back one genuine convert with us, that would be more satisfying, and more nearly worth while, and would enrich God's universe with a greater fullness of joy and hope than simply to spend the

time in cheering and in improving one another in heaven.

"How is it with your own soul, Doctor?" I ventured to ask. "Are you entirely satisfied just with the organizing of simultaneous praise meetings in heaven? Does your soul never cry out for the strenuous life, for the glory and the joy of battling for souls, with which your time was so gloriously filled on earth?"

"Prester!" Christman confessed with strong feeling, "do you know I sometimes think of those campaigning days almost with regret and longing, even here in heaven?"

"You need not spend another moment in regret," Father assured him. "Who knows but that your greater work as an evangelist captain may be still before you? We ask you to take charge of these forces which are mustering for a campaign of salvation in hell. Organize, direct, lead us on to victory as you have shown such signal ability in doing. This is the Lord's Business, brother, just as truly as any he ever laid upon your heart on earth."

I endeavored to follow up the advantage. "Brother Christman," I said as impressively as I knew how to. ('Brother,' you know, is the large word in heaven, as in the New Testament.) Brother Christman, *let no man take thy crown.*"

He understood my reference to the sermon he sometimes used, about the second Thursday afternoon of a series of meetings.

“Friends,” he said finally, “I appreciate, and am touched by your thought of me in connection with this enterprise. Let me tell you in entire frankness that I have not infrequently experienced an impulse toward similar lines of endeavor since coming to heaven. I have been deterred hitherto by an unwillingness to appear inconsistent. In all my preaching on earth I was accustomed to appeal to men and to warn them as on their only probation for eternity. I distinctly discouraged the hope of a probation after death, in all its forms. I would have no one on my force who showed any leaning to it. My men all talked the other thing. To allow even the least element of such an uncertainty in our preaching, so it seemed to me, would take all the force from the evangelistic appeal. Now for me to turn in eternity and to take the lead in a movement presenting the offer of salvation to damned souls in hell would seem to be the height of inconsistency.”

“Pardon me, my dear brother,” I ventured to reply: “the inconsistency, it seems to me, is only upon the surface. I hardly think I ever heard you say anything which I have since forgotten; and just now I recall one of your sayings about the interpretation of the parable of the Prodigal Son. You said you had preached from it occasionally for years as setting forth the possibilities of man’s repentance; but that you had never felt quite satisfied in your conception of the parable, until, of late, it had come to you that its

primary purpose was to set forth the heavenly Father's love. And now how can you look at that parable a moment in the light of eternity and fail to see that it applies with equal force to the love of our Father for every poor prodigal child of His in the far country of hell? Your own discovery in the parable involves eternal redemption. Would it be father love worth illustrating in parable if it turned to inappeasable fury the moment a sinner happened to stumble across the morally accidental boundary line of physical death? Won't God give every one of His prodigals a fair and equal chance to repent and come back to Him? Did they all have this fair and equal chance on earth? What other possible object can the Father have in letting them endure the mighty famine of hell; but that each may be led to come to himself and say, 'I will arise and go to my Father?'

"Let me presume to tell you, dear doctor," I continued, "that no man ever preached the gospel truly as you have, without logically, if unconsciously setting forth the necessity of an æonian redemption. Consistency? The height of inconsistency would be for a preacher like you not to go on proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ till the last prodigal had come back to his Father. You remember Emerson says a foolish consistency is the bug-bear of little minds. Tell me, does your heart never ache for all the hundreds of thousands of people who listened to you

on earth, who showed concern, rose for prayers, got half saved, and still the thorns sprang up and choked the word? Do you suppose God's heart has no ache in it like yours? Just let us put ourselves in God's hands for life-saving use, until the world's last heart-ache finds its only cure. What a shame for a man of your ability and experience to be loafing about in heaven, with nothing doing in your own chosen line, when here are thousands of preachers and personal workers eager to have you put yourself at their head for the grandest soul-winning campaign you ever led! Hell is teeming with wretched, despairing souls, half sick of sin, groping for any ray of hope, ready to catch at any life-line. It has been demonstrated that these people can be saved. Here are two of them, and we can bring you a hundred more. If not one known conversion from hell had yet taken place, still every consideration of reason, of equity, of pity, of religion, every worthy thought of Christ, the self-consistent interpretation of God's Word, and what seems to be a truly unified system of Christian doctrine would bid us believe in its possibility, its God-given commission, its urgent claim upon our consecrated endeavor. If no citizen of heaven had yet found hell, or returned from there; the exercise of our simplest intuitions would bid us set forth to reach it on a saving mission, as confidently as Columbus turned the prow of his vessel westward to find other lands."

Father took up the plea where I left off. "Forgive us, dear Brother, if we seem to persuade you over much," he said. "Such all-important issues hang upon your decision! It still seems to please God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. He still prefers to win men through men, and we still have this treasure in earthen vessels, in order that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man. The complete redemption of our race waits upon the spirit-filled activity of redeemed sinners like you and me. God has blessed your labor in the past; but life was too short and Satan too strong for all you longed to do. God would have us complete in eternity the task which we could barely begin in the mortal life. We whose earthly ministry has been so mixed with failure have the incentive of still seeking for some late sheaves from the fields of hell; but one to whom God has given mighty power to win souls has the far nobler motive of responsibility to that self-same gift; that he may use it wherever lost souls remain to be saved. If you cannot, in good conscience, come with us, brother, we will essay to go in the strength of the Lord our God. We will blunder about, and save such as we may. I, for one, cannot think strange of your hesitation; having been long withheld from the work by scruples of my own. But I will grieve for you and for ourselves; for you, that you will miss the crown of rejoicing which comes with new conquests; for ourselves that we will

miss the confidence which trained and capable generalship inspires, as well as the more satisfying results which such leadership ensures. Like you, in preaching to mortal men, I dreaded to inspire in their breasts a hope of continued probation beyond the grave which might prove delusive, and leave the blood of souls upon my head. I fear still the souls in hell we will find altogether the hardest to arouse will be those who have presumed to trade upon God's longsuffering probation. But now that I have seen both heaven and hell, and have become convinced of my mistaken thought of God's severity in hopelessly damning men, I am experiencing a keen reaction of eagerness for mission work in hell. So we will continually pray for you my dear Doctor, in our scattered warfare and in our councils for its maintenance in the archenemy's country; we will pray that the doubts which cloud the issue may yet dissolve away from before your mental vision, and that with a fresh enthusiasm, reacting from long waiting, you may yet come to us in hell, commissioned to be our general; come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ — to show us how we should preach, and how we should plead, and by what skilled tactics we may conquer; come as the chosen instrument in God's hands to inspire and direct the mightiest revival of all history, even among the prisoners of hell's own world-wide dungeon."

But Christman rose to his full height, with a

strong gesture of dissent. "You need not spend time praying any longer for that," he began, and then some strong emotion choked his utterance.

"But why not, Doctor," Jeanie pleaded in her own irresistible way. "Are you going to forbid us loving you and wishing for you to come and help us? Must we bear the brunt of everything in hell, while men like you who ought to be in the forefront of our endeavor, are holding aloof from us and showing that they don't know what to think of our mission? Why cannot you let us pray that our Master will show you and all of us His will and give us your grand help, if it is His will?"

Our leader's soul filled with tears as he tried to answer. "You need not pray any longer," he explained, "because my mind is already made up. My doubts, such as I had, are all gone. Friends, you've convinced me, and you have even put me to shame. God forgive me for the happy century and a quarter I have spent greeting old comrades and converts in heaven! God help me to accept manfully the challenge you have brought! For by His blessing, friends, I am with you for such time as you wish me for a yokefellow in our long pull on hell."

CHAPTER XX

The rest is a matter of common history, and may be readily gone over. I need only remind my listeners of how our leader himself drew together his thousands of evangelists, singers, and personal workers; of the plan of alliance and of strict comity with General Booth's Army, with which our invasion of hell was begun; of how the whole infernal territory was mapped into zones for successive campaigns, and how each zone was districted and portioned out among individual evangelists each with his own corps of workers; of the great consecration meeting held in heaven when we all met one another soul to soul, and gave ourselves to God to be used in a mission to hell. These things were not done in a corner. Our publicity committee not only had the coming meetings thoroughly and well advertised in the great zone of the Once Half-Converted, where our labors were to begin; but they had also endeavored to send out notice of our undertaking throughout that part of heaven more immediately interested; so that no one could say that an opportunity had not been given him to join the expedition. Several million people had definitely pledged themselves to pray often for a revival in hell. Our consecration meeting was attended by ten or twelve millions. Our Jesus made us glad by His visible presence, equally close to each of

us. He was there to soothe every anxiety, to glorify the sacrifice and sorrow of partings, and to breathe upon us that we might receive the Holy Spirit. The love of heaven beamed upon us from the myriad tender, prayerful spirit-faces, as we sank slowly from view, more than a hundred thousand of us (besides the Salvation Army) singing —

“ Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus going on before.
Christ our royal master leads against the foe.
Onward into battle see His banners go.”

They say even the vast body politic of heaven felt our departure as though a drop of blood had been taken from its heart.

You have heard, no doubt, of the discouragements and discomfitures of our early campaign. At first we seemed to find no one in hell. We could not attract any one for whom we sought to a personal encounter. We preached to great empty spaces. The same sinister silence and solitude with which Jeanie and I found ourselves environed after Wilkinson had gone inside the lodge room now stretched around our allied forces whichever way we directed our invading flight. Even the mission stations we found, where rescue work was already being prosecuted, had been suddenly deserted at our approach by all their unconverted auditors. Many of our comrades became puzzled and discouraged. They came

about the few of us who had been in hell before with insistent questions. "Was this hell indeed, or had we lost our way? Where were the inhabitants? Of what use had been our leave-taking and our imposing preparation, our finished organization, all our committees and departments, our heroic departure, our high hopes and lofty enthusiasm — just to find ourselves in this limitless Sahara of empty glare?"

Even Christman was nonplussed and bewildered. At last he called those of us aside who had enjoyed some previous acquaintance with the ways of hell. "You have brought us here," he protested, "and it falls upon your shoulders to provide us with a congregation. Tell us what this means. Where are the natives we came to evangelize, and how can we get at them? The uncanniness of all this is sapping the courage of our men. I have seen meetings begin slowly; but this outparallels every experience. You surely must be able to guess at the situation better than the rest of us can. It is all new and strange to us. Now I wish you to get this spell broken within a week. I will help you in any way that you can suggest; but there must not be any more time lost."

We were ourselves scarcely less disturbed than our leader. We puzzled over it, and prayed over it; but even Albert and Wilkinson had no definite explanation or suggestion to offer. At last Jeanie proposed that we should all wish hard for the

dusky guide who had first shown me the way to hell, and who had come to our assistance in extremity once before. So we wished for him, and he came from the great space of a different world in hell. "Tell us what has become of all the people," Father demanded.

"They are peeping at you by millions," the man born in hell replied. "They will not let you see them, and each one is trying not to let the others see that he is interested."

"How singular!" I mused. "They did not treat me so when I first reached hell and essayed open air preaching. They flocked around by hundreds of thousands and showed all their feelings."

"The mistake you made this time," the guide explained, "was in sending your publicity committee before to advertise your meetings. Every installed pastor in hell has been denouncing your coming for a month. They have been warning their congregations that you are irresponsible, interloping zealots. They have been spreading various stories about your leader — that he is only actuated by mercenary motives, that he, or a man by his name, once held a seat on the Chicago Stock Exchange, or at least had some transactions in stocks there, that he was fond of fast horses, that his sermons are hired. And they say of you each that you never entirely succeeded in any pastorate you ever had. They have created such a public sentiment, that each citizen is

ashamed to have the other one know that he is even curious about you. Besides this, the lodges have each and all passed a secret order putting any member out of standing who will attend, countenance, or encourage any one of your meetings, or be seen conversing with one of your workers; but to help any one of you get into a lodge has been made a crime against the order, to be punished with the torture."

"Then we might as well go back to heaven, and wait awhile, until we can come and take them by surprise," thought Albert Junior.

"This would be of no use," the creole declared, "for upon your first attempt to return, the same ban and boycott would instantly be put into force again."

"What can we do?" exclaimed Joy in bewilderment.

"There is just one thing to do," advised our native friend. "Your whole evangelistic activity must be concentrated upon making one convert. It is the first conversion which brings the break in a revival."

"But how can we concentrate on anybody," Joy asked, "when there absolutely isn't anybody in sight to concentrate on?"

"Oh that is easy," Jeanie declared. "It will be something like the time Nat and I concentrated on Mr. McGammon. We simply select our man and all pray for him, until he has to come out."

"If you could only see them," the dark brother

declared; "the nearest observers around your host are those who have been drawn by the prayers of those who love them best. Only, these prayers have been sent out scatteringly, each to find its own chosen object. What you need now is to select one of these, acquaint the remainder of your whole evangelistic force with all you know of him or of her, and set them, for the time being, all to praying just for that one; until you get hold of him and save him."

"The only remaining question then is, which?" Father concluded.

"I would take the one who came nearest to being saved the last time you were here," our friend advised again.

I asked Father if he could think of any one in particular in or about his pastorate at Jeroboam's Holl who seemed nearest to being saved; but he failed to remember a single one of his old parishioners who had manifested any distinct trace of a self-consciousness that he or she came under the category of those who need salvation. "During the final moments of my condemnation by the presbytery," he acknowledged, "and just at the moment of my quitting their assembled presence, there seemed to be an undefined revulsion of wistfulness and an unexpected regret over my departure on the part of a large number, as though they would fain have heard more of my matter; but there was no one of them in particular whom

I can single out in memory as having shown himself especially under gracious influence."

"How about Mr. Willoughby?" Jeanie asked, turning to me.

I acknowledged that his case had just occurred to my mind as perhaps the least impossibly hopeless of all the lodge members I had rubbed against.

"No one could ever confidently declare at any moment what Willoughby might really be thinking back of his beak," I said; "but his actions at least showed some interest in personal salvation."

Of course Mrs. Willoughby and the daughter, being among our evangelistic force, were with us in a moment pleading strongly that he might be the chosen object of our prayers, and, to appease their concern, I took our dusky counselor to Christman. When the evangelist had heard all he had to advise, and all I could say definitely for Willoughby, he said to the hell-born brother, "you stay with us and be our Hobab. The force is not complete for hell, without you." Then he issued a general order. "Call in all scouts and specialists," it ran. "Come together in close formation, and pray for nothing else but the conversion of one James Willoughby, Free Mason, ex-magistrate, and church trustee."

Within the stipulated week we began to feel the pull. There was no sudden jerk; but very gradually from an almost imperceptible begin-

ning, we realized that our prayer had caught something. To my intense surprise, the strain increased seemingly far out of proportion to the size of the soul we were pulling upon. Our whole host began to feel it, and sturdy souls bent with reassured purpose to the rope of prayer. Wilkinson, Uncle Linas, Jeanie and I went softly about among them, whispering in each soul's ear all we knew about the object of our united prayers. The man's wife and daughter also tried to tell each one something; to aid in giving prayer more definite shape; but could say little for weeping in their joy and wonder.

"Is this a giant we are drawing to Christ?" Christman asked us quietly. We replied that if such were the case, our friend must have grown prodigiously since we parted. "Willoughby is one of the closest, snuggest, tightest little souls," I explained, "and he has a smooth hard shell all over him, shaped to a beak which rarely ever opens more than half an inch. Unless he has strangely changed, there is little or nothing about him for prayer to catch hold of, except, perhaps, the devotion he professes to his wife and daughter."

The next time we met him our leader remarked, "This pull is more than the pull of one soul. The devil himself could hardly pull harder than this."

"I fear me," Uncle Linas suggested, "that all of old Mystery Lodge has clutched upon Squire Willoughby's soul, to hold it back."

"More likely it is the whole pseudo-Masonic order," Uncle Adolphus thought.

"Well all I've got to say," declared Wilkin-son, "is that if the Free Masons are pulling against you, it'll take more pull than you've got here to do anything."

"Look here, my man," Christman said almost sharply, "Don't you know that when one believer prays, he hitches omnipotence to his object, or to his obstacle?"

"I believe something is going to give way soon," Jeanie declared encouragingly. "Haven't you noticed that the pull is getting more jerky and wavy than it was? There must be some com-mo-tion over there at the other side."

General Booth came back with his army from a fruitless expedition in search of the slums of hell, and finding something actually doing with us, ordered the whole army to take hold in prayer and help pull.

"Everything seemed to have been covered up or cleared out of the way," he reported somewhat dejectedly. "The only discovery we made — and that by an oversight of the infernal authori-ties maybe,— was a great pit full of dead or half dead souls still twitching and quivering as if galvanized. If we find we cannot locate more encouragingly; we will begin work on them; to see if they will not, some of them, be resuscitated by the quickening power of Christ."

"Oh please take me with you!" It was the

plea of little Sadie Echols, instantly close by our side.

It seemed now as though all hell were pulling against our prayers. Word was sent back to our supporters in heaven to pray for the one definite need of this soul's salvation. The current now on was terrific. There were not amperes enough upon the dial to measure it. We began to fear that poor Willoughby might be unbeaked and torn in two. "When he does eventually come," Father said in my soul's ear, "do you know of what it will remind me? It will be like our Seventh Street Branch of the Central Union Mission long ago. When a poor drunken, unsaved fellow did perchance wander into one of our meetings; you know he by no means went out unconverted. We were hungry for lost souls to save, and before our meeting came to its conclusion half of us would be about him in prayer."

So it proved in this case. When the strain opposed to us began to give way, and Willoughby, open-mouthed, unmasked, crying to God for mercy, was drawn to us, with a hundred million black hands clutching at him still, there was short work in getting him to the very center of our phalanx, where, with weeping wife and daughter and with old pals and neighbors praying softly as we patted him, James Willoughby found pardon and acceptance with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and in an hour his tight soul opened out to the sunshine of love like the bud on a bal-

som bough. A shout went up to heaven that one sinner was repenting.

"Out and catch them!" was the cry raised meanwhile at our periphery. "Pray for whom you will," Christman counseled. "Preach to whom you can." It was not long before evangelists and personal workers had scattered out over a great part of hell following glimpses of retreating opponents, beckoning to shifting, changing, melting clouds of possible auditors.

But the immediate effect of Willoughby's conversion did not tell for victory as we had hoped. It seemed at first to lead to a series of misfortunes which all but wrecked our enterprise. To use again a military phrase, the enemy's position was only partially uncovered. The swarm of uncounted damned souls around us revealed its presence only in part, by the constant impact of soul bodies whose weight could be felt; but whose form could not be seen: by calls which drew us here and there only to find emptiness, or else to be rubbed upon singly by a vastly disproportioned mass. Those who were drawn far away from their comrades by their interest in some dear lost soul, or by their eagerness to find an audience for the message of salvation, began sending back signals of distress; and rescuing parties had to be dispatched here and there in anxiety and haste. One of our number, Chaplain Jones, who had helped us in our first raid on Galpin's so called, 'canteens' at the camp, had the misfortune to

lose his temper, and rushed away after a taunting fiend, very much after the manner in which, on that memorable day, he went after one of the boys of his regiment who fled with a bottle of beer from regimental camp to camp.

Our leader kept his nerve splendidly, attending to emergencies and reverses with tireless pertinacity. But after some weeks he sent for Father and me to come into headquarters. We found General Booth there in consultation with him, and with our dusky guide.

"The revival is not coming promptly; as revivals must, if they come at all," our captain explained.

"It must seem like terrible work to you for a first experience," I admitted.

"It is not the terrible work that we mind," the General declared; "we came here for terrible work, we are spoiling for it, we glory in it. But it is the *results* that we are somehow missing."

"Never despair, dear General," Father counseled. "Our fishing for men is not in vain. Have we not already caught one?"

"But that seems rather a little one," Christman objected. "You cannot figure up a revival on the strength of one convert. Our Hobab here promised us greater results; if we could but concentrate and win one.

"I did not have the selecting of that one," the guide protested.

"You left the selection with the Presters here," Christman reminded him.

"Yes I know, and I advised them to select the one they had formerly come nearest to converting," our infernal native admitted. "There must have been a providence in it; but I hardly anticipated that they would settle upon one who would afford so slight an object lesson and demonstration of regenerating power, or one who would apparently pull so feebly upon the others back of him. I begin to feel that I have erred in judgement. I should have counseled you to concentrate, and focus upon the most hardened soul you had found in hell, the one who seemed most hopeless as an object of evangelistic endeavor, the one whose activities for evil are having the widest scope, and whose moral condition and future outlook gives you most confidence in regarding him as entirely reprobate. I feel now that I am to blame for encouraging you to minimize the converting grace of God. I would advise you now to combine and ask for the greatest miracle of grace you can think of, in the regeneration of some one definite individual soul."

"Shall we try the Presters again on the selection?" Doctor Christman demanded.

"I would, certainly," replied our adviser. "Otherwise they might feel that we had lost confidence in them over the meagre outcome of their former choice."

"Perhaps the most hopeless apparent reprobate I discovered," Father said when our leader appealed to him, "was in the person of a Presbyterian elder named James Rorer."

"I decline to believe it," Christman declared promptly. "No Presbyterian elder shall be thus held up as the supreme reprobate of hell during my campaign."

"My son also has had some dealings with him, even in both worlds" Father insisted, "and can doubtless confirm my testimony with regard to him."

"No Father," I said; "for obduracy Rorer might possibly take the prize; but for the activities of widest influence for evil I am thinking of a choice between three others." Then I hesitated.

"Tell us about them," commanded General Booth: "then we can intelligently help your selection."

"First I must ask, would you limit the selection to those of human race?" was my appeal.

"I believe he would have us pray for Satan himself!" Christman exclaimed. "Decidedly we must not! This would be a rash intrusion into the inner-most secrets of the Godhead."

"If you would extend the term, 'human' to cover beings of similar origin, perhaps this would meet young Prester's thought," gently interposed our dusky guide. "I regard myself as human; though born in hell of extraction partly terrestrial, partly Martian. He of whom our brother

is thinking may be of lineage equally unlikely as a trophy of redeeming grace."

"It is not a he, but a she," I explained; "only it is a soul grown almost past human measurements. The other two with whom I came into confidential relations, and between whom and the Satana I would hesitate to accord the preeminence in sin, were Satan himself, and an ex-rumseller now head of the so-called Masonic order of hell."

"Let us try the woman," Christman decided at once. "Time is pressing. The sex also is more capable of sudden and remarkable revulsions of impulse."

So the order went out: "Concentrate again, and pray only for the conversion of a certain Mrs. Guinness, murderess by trade, and present chief consort of Satan."

This time it was decided not to begin gradually, and increase our force of intercession as recruits might come in; but to notify all whose help had been enlisted before, both in hell and in heaven, and agree, at a given signal, all to begin praying at once. So the word was passed quite quietly, and earnest preparation of mind was enjoyed upon all the millions of petitioners along lines of meditation which tend to establish the conviction of God's willingness to answer the request of most unlikely boldness, for the glory of His name. At last the signal was given, and some ten million souls bowed low before God in concerted prayer for the salvation of one woman's wicked soul.

To our astonishment, the answer was immediate. Almost at a bound the she-devil was among us, in all the greatness of her semi-infinite psychical development, in all the sobbing contrition of a woman's heart, broken in conviction of sin. "It is so wonderful that you should care to ask to have me saved!" she cried. "And oh! I have been so miserable! I have not had one moment's peace, since Prester prayed for me as I was dragging him down. Nobody ever prayed for me before."

Hell closed in thick about us now. The secrets of all hearts stood revealed. Satanic rage, open-mouthed astonishment, contagious penitence, soul-curdling confession; fierce resistance to conviction, desperate opposition, trembling terror before God swirled and quivered, and leaped into flame around us. Recognitions instant and startling flashed from soul to soul. Sin and shame and horror bared themselves to the day. Pity and prayer met aching loneliness and moral desolation. God and Satan, heaven and hell wrestled in the open for the prize of souls.

Heaven still wonders over the revival which followed. "Keep close together," was our human leader's order, "and take individual cases only as they come to us." The simultaneous idea was laid aside for the time being, and the work was done on the old mass-meeting plan. Christman preached even as we had never heard *him* preach before. Moody also came and stood in the wide open gate of God's mercy, crying out to souls to

turn and live. Jonathan Edwards came and thundered out his warnings of worse to befall sinners in the hands of an angry God. The rest of us worked in an inquiry meeting continually thronged with seekers, crying, "Is there still hope for me?"

Not only men but demons: spirits who flocked to our meeting for the purpose of opposition; to thwart redemption's power with sneer, or threat, with counter attraction of glittering vice, or with sheer overpowering din of rage and ridicule; were themselves, one and another of them, caught by this mighty thrill and clasp of the hitherto undreamed-of possibility of pardon, and fallen angels, as well as devils once of human shape were found suddenly weeping for sin. Yells of defiance turned to groans of contrition, prayers for mercy, hallelujahs of conscious acceptance with God.

Converts went out to find others. There could have been no restraining them, if we had tried. With a reason for the new hope that was in them as strong and calm as the unchanging attributes of God, yet as novel to their minds as the first seeing of one born blind; there came to each a revulsion of feeling dynamic with the pent up power of ages of misery turned to overwhelming joy, and the first longing of each was for some one other chum of perdition to experience the same mighty change. Thus the revival swept out beyond all human directing grasp, the results of it

overwhelmed its organization, its power radiated beyond its machinery, parallel currents vied with its wires.

Other evangelistic centers began to be established, some of them by direction, others God alone knew how. As in a great conflagration sparks drop and kindle upon distant roofs, the flame of revival sprang up continually in the most unlikely places. Even Jeroboam's Holl experienced two remarkable conversions of church members, with one, near by, still more remarkable, even the conversion of a minister of their Presbytery. They sent in a request for Father to come back to them as their own special evangelist. He had to labor, in his inimitably patient way against the frosty influence of criticism without end directed at revivals in general and this one in particular; yet his efforts bore fruit for God, even in the conversion of such hopelessly theological minds as those of elder McCracken and Doctor Raxton.

Many still stood out unconvinced and gospel hardened. The greatest results, as has so often happened, were achieved in the lower levels of hell. Here newly converted hellians sometimes almost outrivaled heaven's own missionaries as preachers of salvation. Objects of the bitterest persecution, the storm which swirled around each of them gave him or her an opportunity to direct the arrows of conviction between the armor joints of souls too angry to be on their guard. Mrs.

Guiness, no longer Mrs. Satan, now the outstanding target for all her former consort's malevolence and malice, sanctified in her humility and sorrow, lovely in the tingling of an eternal blush, was working almost everywhere at once in the spirit of a Nellie Conroy, with skill and effectiveness of the archtemptress become a winner of souls. But her tenderest endeavors were exerted, along with those of the Salvation Army in the work of rescue and recuscitation upon the brink of the lowest pit of hell. Little Sadie Echols was with them there, and almost their first achievement was the quickening of Hatchet, so long dead in trespasses and sins.

Even Mystery Lodge was visited. Already somewhat shaken by the extraction of Willoughby, it experienced a far greater shock in the sudden and unexplained conversion of Elder Smiley. He was stricken speechless with contrition, and began to shake with a dumb chill of dread over what hell might still have in store for him. The news of this most marvelous change of all reached the souls of Mystery's former chaplain's Godson and Galpin, and with Christman's consent, and the help of Uncle Adolphus, they gathered a strong company of ex-Masons together from our evangelistic force, of whom quite a number, like Parson Weems (now grown strong in the Lord and in the power of His might) had been ministers of the gospel on earth; and together they forced a prayerful entrance

into the infernal free-masonry, in spite of all McGammon's wizzardry of resistance.

A revival in hell! How utterly vain are even wordless symbols of thought to picture forth the melodrama of its groans and halelujahs, its age-long lethargy of hopelessness waking to sudden life and joy! Such a revival earth never saw; yet the tremor of its pulsations seemed to be felt even in mortal lives. It was a time of unusual manifestation of the power of God quickening dependent souls. This was the Year of Hunger on earth, when the Farmer's Trust met its Waterloo, and when the last survival of anarchism and of atheistic humanism struggled viciously in its death-throe; while the ore of humanity went through God's hottest furnace, to come out pure gold. I should like so much to tell you a thousandth part of the wonderful personal incidents of our revival, of how Alton Chartier found his way into our inquiry meeting, and of how Jeanie won him to Christ; also of Lovejoy's success in bringing in Lou Sawyer and many another poor suicide, of how Maggie Rorer and her mother went after the elder from one of hell's hiding places to another *until* they found him, of how they loved him until he could hate no longer, and so brought him into the kingdom. I cannot tell you how glad I would be to talk over a great many of these details with you sometime when we meet in heaven, and to put each of you, gentle listeners, upon the track of some one dear to you

whom you may help Jesus save out of hell; some one for whose salvation you know now that you did not wrestle as you might have done on earth, and for whom, to get the pain of an endless regret out of your mind, you might gladly be willing to make a little journey in hell.

So it came about, toward the close of this memorable year, that some of us who had come up to heaven with a company of converts, among whom were the lady hierarch of Christian Science, and elders Rorer and McCracken, when we were about to descend again amid hell's dear scenes of revival power, met a group of philosophers and theologians gazing out from the edge of heaven in general survey of the stirring events occurring on earth, in hell, and everywhere. There were Joseph Addison Alexander, Doctor Hitchcock, Joseph Cook, Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, and Mozoomdar; together with Professor Noah K. and the apostle John, and other men distinctly called of God to the mission of high thought. Father and I, Brother Strong and Truth Custiss, Mother, Jeanie, Joy and her two Alberts, together with some other plain workers for God, stopped awhile to hear these men think.

"Is the consummation at hand?" Alexander asked, "Are we nearing the restitution of all things, the great adoption, to wit the complete redemption, for which the whole creation has been groaning and travailing in pain together until now?"

“Nay,” replied he who was in the spirit on the Lord’s Day on Patmos, “there are ages of conflict yet to come. The great day of Judgment, and the many days of tears and triumph are yet to come. Christ must descend and reign on earth, in every world, in hell; even He whose right it is; The Spirit and the Bride must still say, ‘Come!’”

Jeanie drew a little closer to my side and whispered, “Then there are still to be ages in which to believe to see even poor Mister McGammon and the Devil saved.”

But Father was listening to something from far away. His soul’s ear had caught the vibration of a song. “Listen!” he said, and every soul about us grew still. It was beginning, oh so softly! all over hell at once. The discords of that dreadful place were inaudible by reason of moral distance; but this harmony in song came up to us with increasing distinctness. It was the harmony of a sob of pity mingling with a sob of joy. It was the harmony of love with penitence. It was the sweetest refrain to which our souls had ever listened. It swelled up vibrant and clear; then lingered away into a whisper. But an antiphonal strain came now from the heaven behind us, thrilling the universe with hope. We too joined in the chorus and even the hearts of living men on earth vibrated unconsciously in harmony with it, while new-born souls coming up from hell, as well as missionary spirits going thither, let their voices blend with

ours in rich symphonal accord. Stronger and vaster grew the chorus, as the voice of many waters, as the voice of mighty thunderings, the voice of a great multitude which no man could number. Almost it seemed that we could hear each new soul's voice chiming in; until it seemed sure that every creature would yet take up the anthem of blessing, and honour, and glory and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb, heaven's lamb as it had been slain. Our hearing extended to futurity. We caught the coming notes of an anthem rolling onward through ages that are to be. We heard voices yet unborn bringing fresh harmonies, sounding untried chords. Life after life quivered out of the minor key into the rich major of full content. It seemed that not one soul would be left sullenly dumb, or bitterly discordant; but as we leant to catch the far away crescendo, the chorus became complete in every part, swelling up from God's vast universe in the new song of praise to Him who alone is worthy to take the book of destiny and to open the seals the seals thereof; to Him who was slain, and who has redeemed us to God out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation, out of every planet and prison house of perishing souls; just to our own crucified Jesus, the same world-sufficient Saviour, yesterday, to-day, and forever.

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